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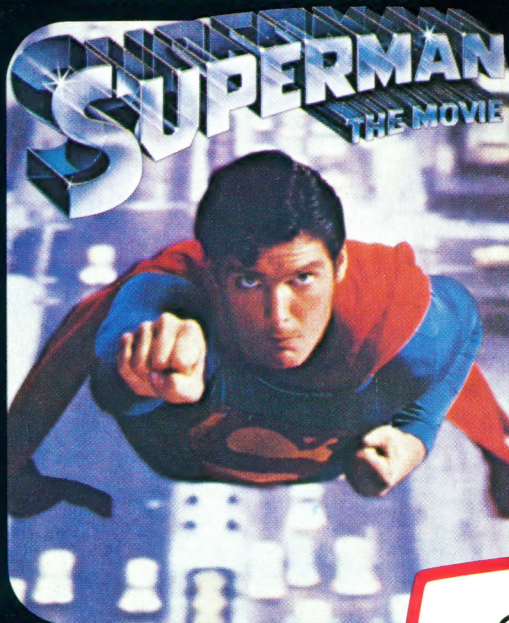
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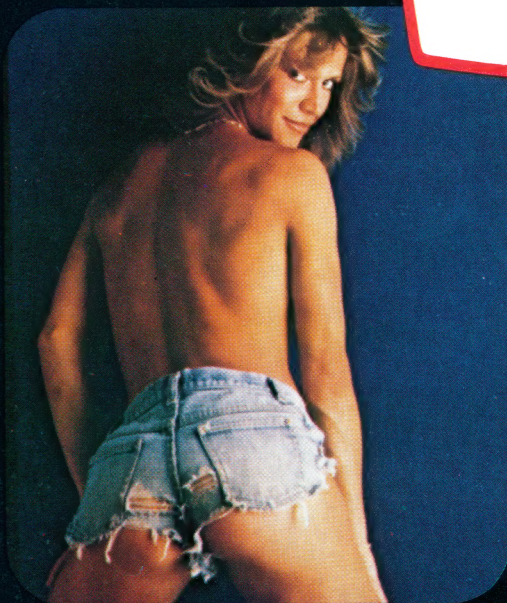
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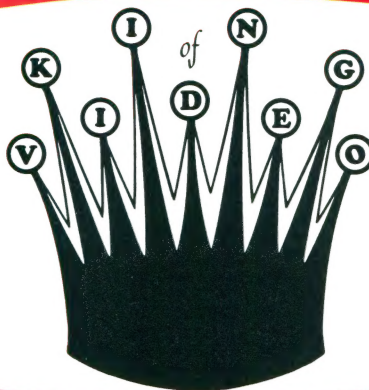


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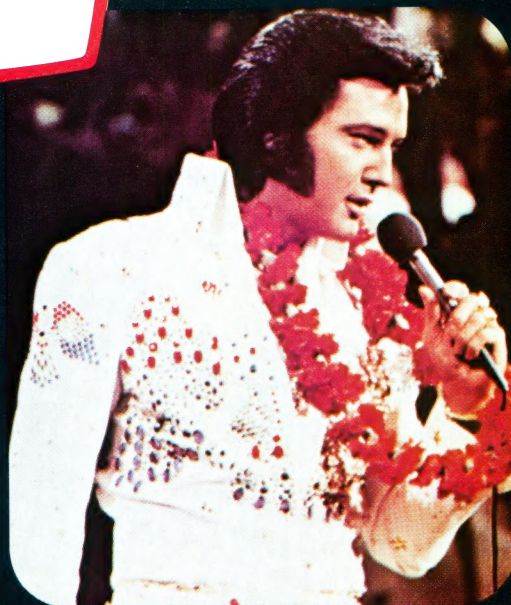


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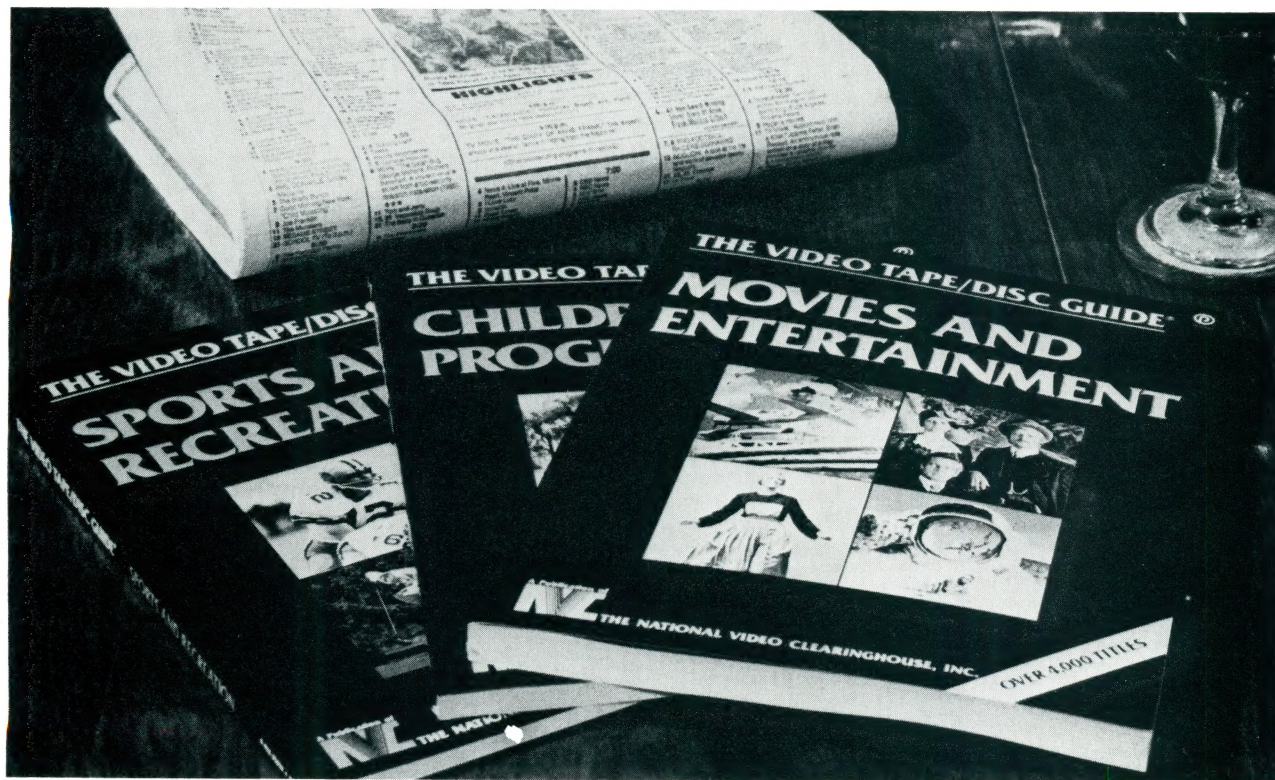
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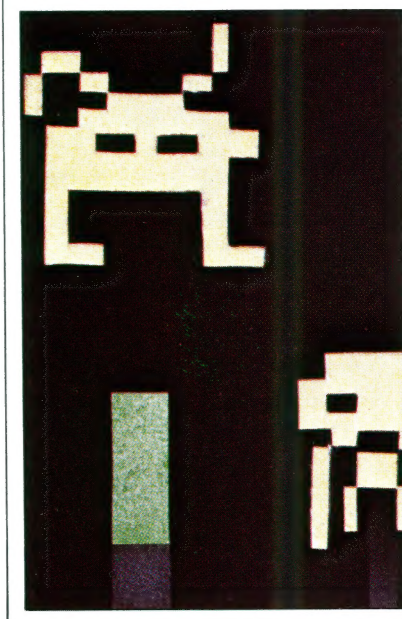
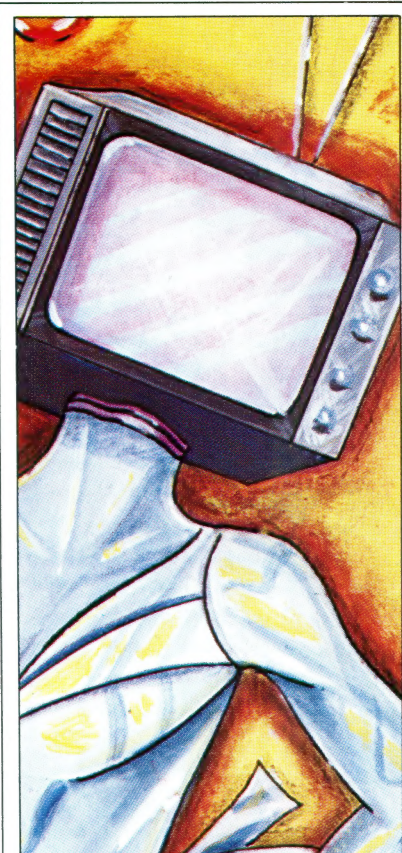
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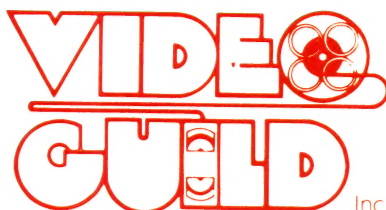
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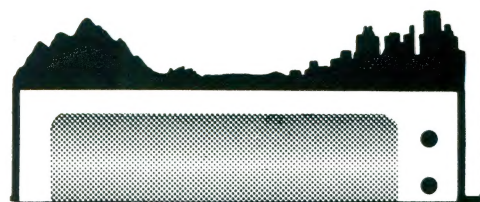
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In last month's editorial, I stated there was a "very simple method of keeping the kiddies away from potentially harmful television," and that method would be discussed this month.

But first, a word or two about "potentially harmful." Then a couple words about "responsibility."

"Potentially harmful" is in the mind of the parents. Personally, I cringe whenever the so-called experts come out and tell us such mainstays of children's television as *The Three Stooges* and *Bugs Bunny* are likely to turn our kids into violence-prone zombies. Three generations of Americans were raised on this type of material: as a matter of fact, the children of the early 1930s saw more out-and-out violence in one afternoon at the movies—with the serial chapter, cartoon and double feature—than today's children are likely to see during an entire week of modern video fare. As I recall, that generation—today's grandparents—turned out all right.

But as I said, parents have the right to raise their kids as they see fit. If they think *The Three Stooges* and *Bugs Bunny* are O.K., that's O.K. by me. If they are making an informed choice.

That's where "responsibility" comes in. Today's parents probably remember Moe, Larry, and Bugs. They might not be too clear about *Speed Racer* or *Spider-Man*. They certainly should take a look at what current programmers are offering up. They should discuss it with their children—99% of the kids out there probably realize the Coyote could not possibly make it in real life after one of those mammoth falls; parents should discover if their kids are in that last percentile.

More importantly, parents should also consider the quantity of television experience. I certainly would not want my pre-schooler plunked down in front of the tube to the exclusion of other experiences: reading, playing with friends, falling off of teeter-totters.

Before parents consider methods of restricting access to television, they must decide upon the quality and the quantity of programming they allow their children to view. This has been said before, but it has not been said enough: *the television set is not the baby-sitter*.

You just might not want to let your kids at the boob tube until they start

grammar school. And *then* only after they have finished their homework.

So how do you keep them away?

Go to any hardware store—or even some larger drug and food stores—and buy a little rubber plug that has an electrical socket at one end and a lock at the other. Plug your television set into the device and lock it. Give a key to your spouse and to those other family members you deem responsible enough to have one.

To be fair, you should remove temptation. Take the television out of the family room and put it in your bedroom. Certainly keep it out of the bedrooms of those children who do not have free access to it.

If you have cable television—or if your community is looking at proposals from cable suppliers—press the companies into supplying channel selectors with locks built right in. Many outfits have a special key device (often optional) for the so-called adult channels—the same is true for many over-the-air pay-TV operations.

Eventually, televisions and cable systems will have esoteric lock systems—allowing you to program certain "off" periods and banned channels—as an option available to all parents. They certainly will if enough parents complain loudly and persistently.

If you own a video disc or video cassette player and you do not want your kids to see X-rated and R-rated movies, *do not buy them*. No matter where you hide the tapes, your kids will find them. Of course, you could put a lock-plug on the machine, but this will kill the built-in LED clock.

Whatever you do, you cannot bring up your kids in a vacuum. If they want to see a particular banned show, they will find a friend with a parent who does not share your attitude and they will go over to that friend's house and watch the program. I hate to say it, but that type of youthful deceit is part of growing up. You can keep such parental circumvention down to a minimum; I doubt whatever your kids get away with here will cause them harm.

As I said, selecting your children's television programming is your right and your responsibility. Preventing other parents from making the same choices is not.

—Mike Gold
Editor

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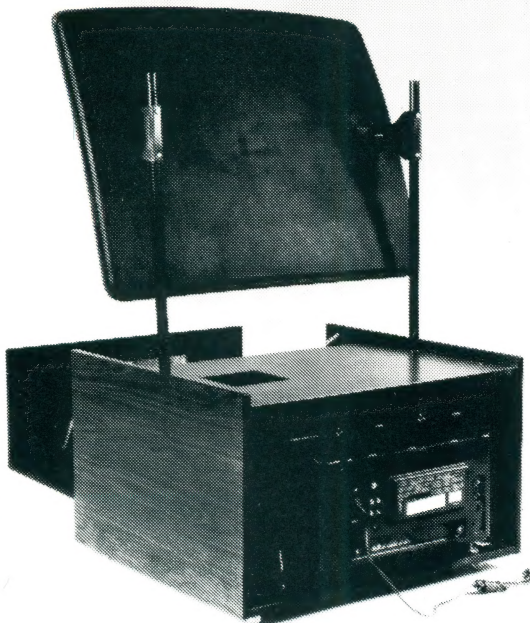
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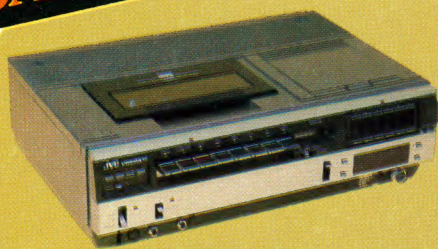
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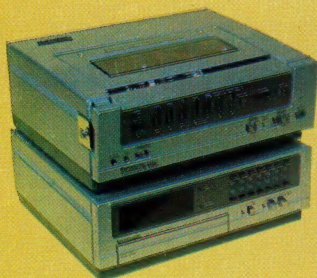


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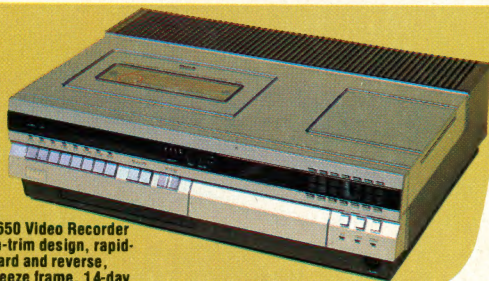
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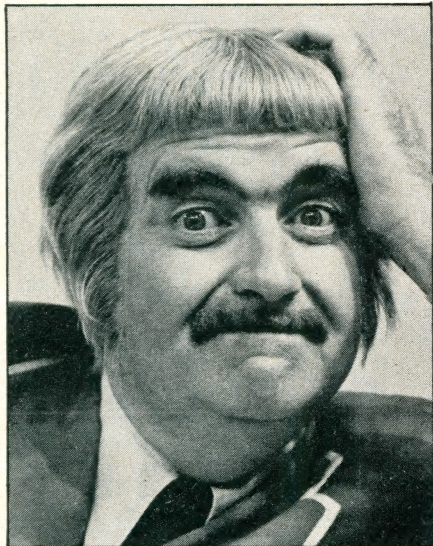
BIG BROTHER

For years we have all heard of those strange things known as Nielsen Ratings, but until I read Ann DeLarye's perspective on the Nielsen Family, I never realized how big—and important—they are. Frankly, I find having the American public reduced to its lowest common denominator for the convenience of a computer a disturbing thought. Still, at least now we're on to them and their views of us. It's a sure bet that Big Brother—i.e. the A.C. Nielsen Company—wasn't about to tell us on their own.

M. Larsen
Chicago, IL

KIDEO AND THE FOLKS

As the owner of a brand-new VCR, as well as the parent of two young children, I quickly discovered that my video cassette recorder was not to remain my toy exclusively for very



long. The kids took over. Now, rather than turning on the tube and hoping for the best, I have the option of popping a tape into the VCR and showing the kids something that is actually good for them. Still, the majority of video shops I frequent do not carry much in the way of children's programming, so Marilyn Ferdinand's guide to "kideo" tapes comes in handy.

I have long felt that video tape—and now disc—could be a powerful tool for education in the home. It is refreshing to see that suppliers of

video tapes not only feel the same way but are actively doing something about it.

W. Bremmer
Lakewood, NJ

DID NOT COMPUTE

Until I read Rick Oliver's *Guide to Home Computers*, I was in a quandry as to which machine I should buy. I know very little about computers, but most magazines write their articles like they expect to be read only by experts. This Guide was aimed at the beginner, which places *Video Action* at the top of the heap as far as I am concerned. You write for the vidiot, not down to us.

A Pinza
Sacramento, CA

HEAR, HEAR!

I would just like to add my voice to the hue and cry raised by Editor Gold in his February 8:00 Central Time against planned obsolescence in VCRs. If enough of us make enough noise about it, it won't be the consumer who will have to beware. It will be the VCR manufacturers.

Don Coleman
Grafton, WV

PAPER CHASE CAUGHT

Thank goodness for people like John Houseman who refuse to let the rootrot that network television has become interfere with quality programming. With such pap as (fill in the name of just about any network show) filling the airwaves, it is nice to know that a fine program like *Paper Chase* still has a timeslot to call its own. It is a visual feast next to the average fast-food programming. Three cheers for Houseman and PBS. Thomas O'Connor
New Orleans, LA

NO MORE BUGS?

Though I was hard pressed to find much of a connection with video—except for a brief reference to cable television—I nonetheless found John Tebbel and Martha Thomases's article on new animation fascinating. It would be nice if some of the works

they mentioned could find their way to cable or video cassettes so the rest of the world could see what is being done.

The only thing that worries me about this new wave in the animation field is the fate of some of our old favorites. Does the advent of such artists as Austin and Hayes and the others mean the end of Bugs, Mickey, and Daffy?

Paul Wong
Brooklyn, NY

MORE COLUMNS

Video Action comes as a nice addition to the field of video magazines. The articles are, for the most part, informative and interesting. What I would like to see more of, though, is columns. Newsline and Prima Facie generally contain some of the best stuff in the issue and Vintage Video is downright great. Additional columns on some of the specialized fields—computers, satellites, etc.—would be most welcome, as well as another good reason for reading your magazine. S.R. Franklin
Taos, NM

(We have added a column on home computers and one to handle our reader's consumer queries—*Video Action Express*. Currently in the works is a column which will report on the latest developments, both technical and otherwise, from California.)

VIETS VDT

Being a long time Lou Grant fan, I always wondered what real-life reporters felt when confronted for the first time with the blank green stare of the VDT. Now I know. Thanks, Ms. Viets, it was lots of fun. Betsy Kowalski
Berwyn, IL

MIS-M*A*S*HED

Where were you when I needed you? I bought a copy of *M*A*S*H: The Exclusive, Inside Story* expecting it to be a *M*A*S*H* fan's dream come true. It wasn't—in fact, it was just as bad as your review said. From now on, I think I'll pay more attention to your reviews and less to my faith in book publishers. A. Silverman
Alexandria, VA

Send your letters and comments to:

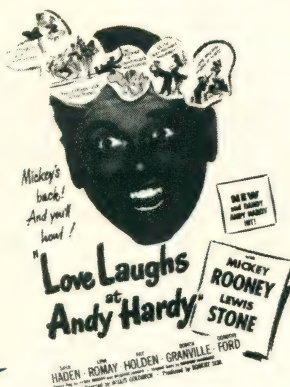
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GUTSY TELEVISION LIVES, JUST NORTH OF THE BORDER

An oft-asked question in the video tape trading world concerns overseas dealing. The cream of the British crop—historical soap operas like *I Claudis* and *Poldark*—generally finds its way onto the domestic Public Broadcasting Service, but quite a number of interesting entertainment series only turn up on subscription and cable outlets. If they turn up at all.

Simply trading video cassettes with overseas pen-pals does not work. The U.S. television broadcast standard—the NTSC (National Television System Committee) 525 lines of resolution—is incompatible with the 625-line PAL (phase alternation line) system employed in England, Australia, and much of Europe. Whereas the Beta and VHS tapes are the same, the signals placed on them are different, and playing a British tape on an American machine will result in excellent sound but no picture whatsoever. That makes it difficult on television addicts who enjoy many of the British productions.

Canadian television uses the same NTSC broadcast standard as the United States (indeed, Mexico and Japan also use this system) and they air many series U.S. stations pass up. If you are interested in obtaining any of these hard-to-get series, establishing a contact in Canada or in a U.S. border town like Buffalo or Seattle is the way to do it.

Some of the more interesting shows that have aired in Canada in recent years include:

The Survivors, a BBC serial created by Terry Nation, a former writer for *Doctor Who* and the one-time story editor for *The Avengers*. This thought-provoking drama deals with the people remaining on Earth after a world-wide plague. Carolyn Seymour and Ian McCulloch star.

The Professionals, an action-adventure hour from *Avengers'* producer Brian Clemens. Violence galore here, this police/spy drama could never be aired on U.S. commercial television, although it has surfaced on a couple of domestic subscription systems. Gordon

Jackson of *Upstairs, Downstairs* fame stars as the head of a top-level criminal and espionage investigation unit.

The Sweeney is a British cop series similar in content to *The Professionals*. It was considered too "British" to be

syndicated in the U.S. and it is thought by some to be an Anglo-Kojak.

The Phoenix Team is a Canadian-produced series filmed around Toronto. Don Francks and Elizabeth Shepherd star as a pair of over-the-hill spies who still manage to get the job done.

Omega Factor is a weird British entry starring James Hazeldine as an investigative reporter who travels the world writing about the occult.

Bizarre is the title of a John Byner satirical series that will also air on the Showtime cable network. As it contains some nudity, it is unlikely to air on U.S. commercial stations.

This is just a small sampling of shows airing on Canadian television. There is more, including sitcoms (Canada aired the second season of John Cleese's *Fawlty Towers* over a year ago) and documentaries that are worth watching.

It is interesting to note the sedate Canadians think nothing of airing shows that would be considered too violent by us folks south of their border.

I am sorry to say we do not have room this month for any of your questions—we have to finish off our index to *The New Avengers*. The Q & A's will be back next month—same time, same station.

Completing our *New Avengers* index, the second season shows originally aired in 1977 in England, and were first aired—out of sequence—in the U.S. on CBS during the 1978-1979 season.

Regulars: Patrick MacNee as John Steed, Gareth Hunt as Mike Gambit, and Joanna Lumley as Purdey.

2nd Season: shows 14 through 17 filmed in Canada, shows 24 through 26 filmed in France.



John Steed's recurring adversary, from "The Last of the Cybernauts."

The Professionals featured violence galore that could never be aired on U.S. commercial television, although it has surfaced on a couple of domestic subscription services.

— OVERVIEW by Larry Charet —

14. "Complex." Written by Dennis

Spooner and directed by Richard Gilbert. The Avengers journey to Canada on the trail of an elusive Russian agent known only as Scapina. Baker: Cec Linder. Talbot: Harvey Atkin. Karavitch: Vlasta Vrana. Kuschew: Rudy Lipp.

15. "The Gladiators." Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Claude Fournier. The Avengers are pitted against a gang of Russian super agents

22. "Obsession." Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Ernest Day. A man Purdey once loved returns from her past with a plot to kill an Arab diplomat. Larry Duma: Martin Shaw. General Canvey: Mark Kingston. Commander East: Terence Longdon. Kilner: Lewis Collins.

23. "Angels of Death." Written by Terrence Feely and Brian Clemens, directed by Ernest Day. British agents

It is interesting that sedate Canadians think nothing of airing shows that would be considered too violent for those of us south of their border.

out to destroy a security installation in Canada. Sminski: Louis Zorick. Peters: Neil Vipond. O'Hara: Bill Starr.

16. "Forward Base." Written by Dennis Spooner and directed by Don Thompson. Steed and company discover a Russian missile base hidden beneath Lake Ontario.

17. "Emily." Written by Dennis Spooner and directed by Don Thompson. The Avengers must safeguard an antique auto that contains the only fingerprint of an enemy agent. Miss Daly: Jane Mallet. Collings: Les Carlson. Phillips: Richard Davidson.

18. "Hostage." Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Sidney Hayers. Steed must aid enemy agents who have kidnapped Purdey and have demanded allied defense plans in exchange for her release. McKay: William Franklyn. Spelman: Simon Oates. Walters: Michael Culver. Suzy: Anna Palk.

19. "Trap." Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Ray Austin. A mandarin crime boss lures The Avengers to his island hideout and plans to hunt them down "most dangerous game" style. Soo Choy: Terry Wood. Acarti: Ferdie Mayne. Don Carlos: Robert Rietty. Brine: Stuart Damon.

20. "Dead Men Are Dangerous." Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Sidney Hayers. A dying defector, shot by Steed, plots a diabolical revenge. Crayford: Clive Revill. Perry: Richard Murdoch. Penny: Gabriella Drake.

21. "Medium Rare." Written by Dennis Spooner and directed by Ray Austin. A spiritualist warns Steed that someone in the ministry is out to frame him as a double agent. Wallace: Jon Finch. Victoria Stanton: Sue Holderness. Richards: Jeremy Wilkins. Roberts: Neil Hallet.

are suddenly dying after visits to a secret health farm. Coldstream: Dinsdale Landon. Tammy: Caroline Munro. Manderson: Terence Alexander.

24. "The Lion and the Unicorn." Written by John Goldsmith and directed by Ray Austin. The Avengers construct an elaborate charade to convince everyone a top enemy agent is still alive, even though he has accidentally been killed. Unicorn: Jean Claudio. LeParge: Maurice Marsac. Henri: Raymond Bussieres.

25 & 26. "K Is For Kill" (shown as a two hour movie over CBS, originally broadcast as a two-parter in England). Written by Brian Clemens and directed by Yvon Marie Coulais. The Avengers journey to France to deal with Russian soldiers who appear to be fighting World War II today. Diana Rigg returns as Mrs. Peel in a cameo appearance and in clips from the original Avengers series. Colonel Martin: Pierre Vernier. General Gaspard: Maurice Marsac. Stanislav: Charles Millot. Toy: Paul Emile Deiber.

TV Obscura

William Tell: Channel 9, Chicago

Daktari: Channel 5, Flint, Michigan

Buccaneers (with Robert Shaw): Channel 21, Madison, Wisconsin

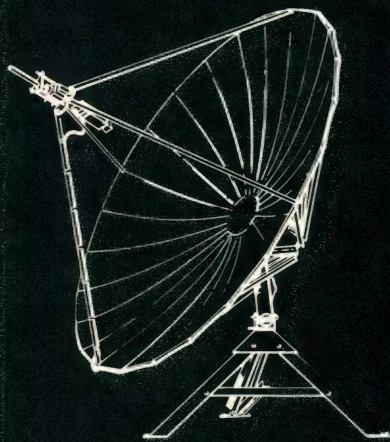
The Persuaders: Channel 47, Toronto

It Takes A Thief: Channel 13, Los Angeles

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INTERNATIONAL CASSETTES

Q: I want to bring video cassettes back to my country where the electricity is 220 volts and 50 cycles, and I would like to know whether I will have some problems about the electric system. Please advise. T.S., Abilene, TX

A: Unfortunately, you did not mention exactly which country you are returning to. You will need an electrical adaptor—easily available from any large hardware store or most discount stores—in order to adapt your machine to the 220 volt/50 cycle standard. But that is not your main problem.

As noted in this issue's *Vintage Video* column, the United States television broadcast standard of 525 lines of resolution and 60 images a second is relatively unique: Canada and Japan share this system. Other nations employ systems which use a different number of lines and images. Furthermore, different nations broadcast on other portions of the radio wave spectrum: channel 2 in the United States is a different frequency than channel 2 in England.

What it all boils down to is this: whereas your video cassette recorder is not likely to be useable to record overseas—or to play back tapes recorded overseas—it will playback tapes recorded in the United States, Canada or Japan if you bring along a U.S.-standard television set to use as a monitor.

A ROSE IS A ROSE?

Q: I recently purchased a video cassette of *THE ROSE* with Bette Midler and found to my chagrin that it was 45 minutes short of its theatrical

release running time. It had, I might add, a beginning and an end so I know, most likely, that technical problems are not to blame. What's up with this? Is this a portent of things to come... companies releasing movies edited like they were for the afternoon 3:00 Early Show? B.F., Brooklyn, NY

A: Magnetic Video assured *Video Action Express* they have not cut *The Rose* and wondered if perhaps you did not inadvertently purchase a bootlegged version. It is difficult for us to understand how this could have happened, since you do mention that the tape had a beginning and an end. We would be interested in hearing from any other readers who have experienced a similar problem with *The Rose* or any other prerecorded material they have purchased.

DEALER BLUES

Q: I need some advice or assistance with a problem I have been having

***My patience
is wearing
pretty thin.
I have
called this
company
many times.***

with a video cassette distributor by the name of Norman R. Selinger of Bethesda, Maryland. It has now been over a year since they have sent me any notification or form about receiving a refund for \$316 worth of cassettes that never came. My patience is wearing pretty thin. I have called this company many times to find out what their problem is. Each time I call, I talk to the business agent who tells me things like, "You'll receive your refund shortly," or "I'm sending out your refund today." I have also received several sarcastic remarks along with the runaround I'm getting. The odd thing is that prior to this order I had done a considerable amount of business with the company. Why I am getting this treatment I cannot understand. I have told them I do not want replacement tapes. I want a refund, at least, for all the anguish they have caused me.

I would like to know what kind of action I can take in this matter. I am desperate to resolve this situation. I have come to the end of my rope. J.M.H., Saco, ME

A: We called the Montgomery County Better Business Bureau, who said they have received two complaints against the company within the last reporting period. One was an "information only" type complaint concerning dissatisfaction with a purchase, another alleging false advertisement. Upon receipt of a copy of your original money order we will forward it to the Montgomery County Better Business Bureau who have promised to act on your complaint. Let us know if you receive your refund because there are other means we can explore until you receive satisfaction. We will keep our readers informed of the outcome.

PORN ACROSS THE BORDER

Q: On page 38 of your premiere issue, your writer states: "ELECTRIC BLUE (is) a regularly-issued video magazine devoted to erotic matters." I ordered a copy and have just been notified by Canadian Customs that it has been classified as "immoral or indecent."

I am appealing that classification and have written to Kenyon Video (from whom I purchased the tape) in Connecticut for any help they can provide. Is ELECTRIC BLUE really that rotten? Is it worse than the print material that is readily available almost everywhere? J.R., Claremont, Ontario, Canada

A: You are probably out of luck. Kenyon Video's Kevin Montanero has had numerous problems with the Canadian Post Office, with about 60% of the merchandise he ships being impounded—he thinks it is getting worse. No one in Canada handles the magazine on a regular basis, so you may have to wait until you can procure it.

No, *Electric Blue* is neither more "immoral" (whatever that means) nor "indecent" than most porn, either print or electronic, that we have seen. In fact, it is considerably less "rotten" than the vast bulk of erotic material that has passed before our bleary eyes. We would, however, like to be kept informed of your travails.

An interesting note: Canada probably would have let the magazine through if it had been mailed in the country. The actions of the Canadian Post Office appear to be more xenophobic than prudish.



Video Action Express is our monthly reader service column. If you have a problem with a video manufacturer or dealer, if you cannot get satisfaction from a direct mail merchant, if you cannot get quality service from your cable or pay television supplier, or if you just have a particular question about the world of new video, write us. We will do our best to clear up the problem.

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PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT

NEW PRODUCTS

AND THEY'RE OFF!

The smoke has barely cleared from the first shots fired in the great videodisc war and already the various electronics companies the world over are rushing to introduce their machines to the waiting market.

Even though the format has yet to be seen by the buying public, the Video High Density (VHD) videodisc player is being announced to the world. One of the first to do so—after VHD parent company JVC—is Quasar, which plans to release their disc player later this year.

The VHD format employs a grooveless capacitance system: a metal shoe rides the surface of the disc and picks up the electronic information the conductive plastic disc gives off. The Quasar machine features stop action mode, search capability for the 54,000 frames per one hour side of each disc, fast and slow motion in forward and reverse, and random access to any of the numbered frames, as well as chapter search.

DO YOU BRING YOUR OWN RECORDING HEADS?

When you go in search of a new VCR, you will quickly discover \$1200 to \$1500 is not a lot of money.

Some VCR manufacturers have gone the other way with new model VCRs built especially to sell at a substantially lower price. The Quasar VH5015SW is one of these "no frills" video cassette recorders and it is their answer to research which showed that a large number of consumers would like to own a VCR, though not necessarily an expensive model laden with special effects.

The VHS format VH5015SW offers six hour recording capacity, a remote pause/edit control, a 24-hour programmable memory, and a memory tape counter.

Magnavox is also coming out with a low cost VCR, the Model 8310. It, too, is in the VHS format and features six hours of recording, a 24-hour memory, remote pause control, and electronic digital clock. It retails for around \$800.

Perhaps all the other gizmos they

TWO TRACKS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

One of the laser optical videodisc's main attractions is its vast array of special effects features, with stereo sound being one of the most impressive of the lot.

Until now, the old video cassette recorder could not touch the optical disc machine in that area, even though VCRs have been around for several years longer than their technologically

could give them stereo sound on video tape, but it seems that it took the threatening shadow of the videodisc to fall across the marketplace before this option was introduced.

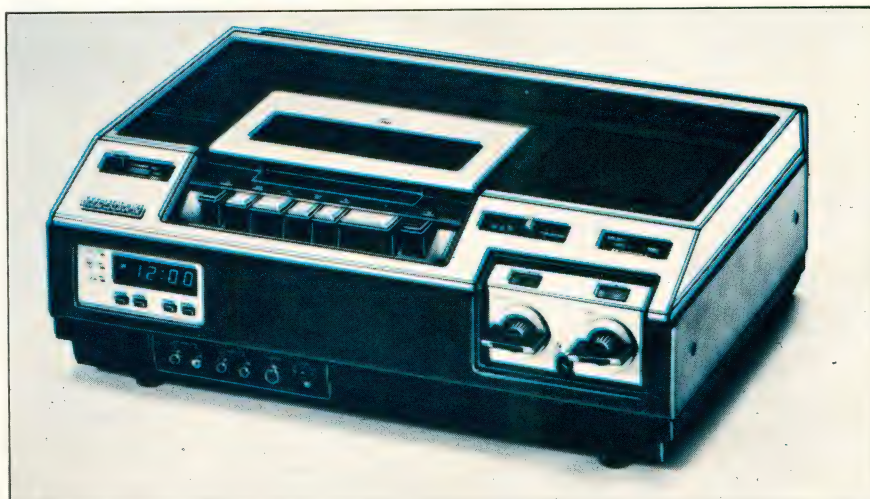
No longer do video cassette junkies have to waste their time recording dull mono versions of televised rock concerts that are also simulcast over stereophonic FM radio stations; now they can get the stereo the music deserves.



advanced video kin. Akai has just announced a new system that puts an end to the ugly sister status of the VCR in the sound department.

The ActiVideo VPS-7350 is the first VCR available in the U.S. to feature dual audio tracks, allowing for stereo sound or two separate sound tracks to accompany the picture. VCR owners long have wanted a machine that

Software producers do not plan to be left too far behind Akai and the VPS-7350 stereo wonder. They are even now planning on marketing prerecorded video cassettes in stereo format, although that will not come for at least several months. Foreign language tapes, with English on one track and the foreign tongue on the other, will also be available.



are sticking into VCRs these days are nice to play around with, but for those who are interested, though not fana-

tical about owning a recorder, the Quasar and Magnavox machines are a boon.

ONE MORE TIME— WITH FEELING!

To tell the truth, there are so many new model video cassette recorders hitting the market these days that we are running out of clever ways to introduce them. The newest entry into the competition comes from JVC in the form of a lightweight portable VCR.

The model HR-2200U weighs in at



11.4 pounds, including battery pack, and its largest dimension is under 12 inches. It operates on 9.6 watts and has three power source options: house-

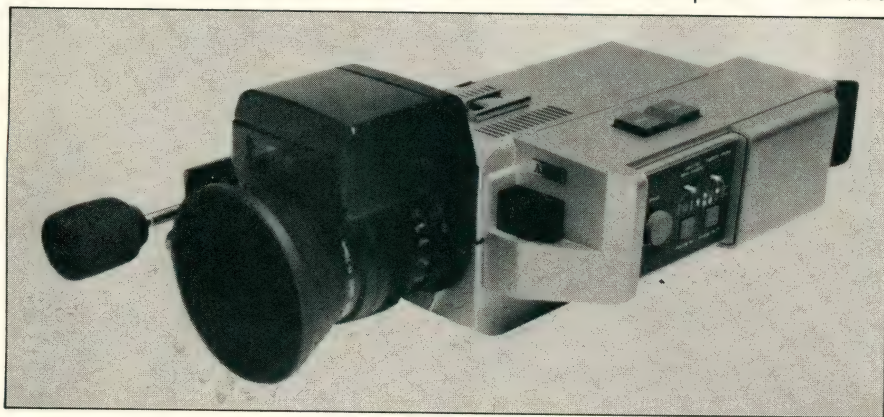
hold AC, car battery, or the optional battery pack. The new JVC unit is also equipped with a microprocessor full-logic control over taping operations. Solenoid controls for selection of modes is featured along with the Edit Start Control, a handy little device that eliminates visual gaps and noise between shows or shots on the tape by aligning the start of the segment being recorded with the end of the previous selection.

Also incorporated into the HR-2200U is Shuttle Search, which forwards or advances the tape at about 10 times normal speed. It also has slow motion playback (from one-sixth to one-thirtieth normal speed), freeze-frame, single-frame advance, four motors, and an LCD tape counter that stops the tape at zero on rewind or fast forward.

At a suggested retail price of \$1050, the JVC HR-2200U VCR is certainly competitive with larger model recorders.

CHEESE!

As VCRs grow smaller so do the accessories, and everything is aimed towards making each new model more portable than the last. In this vein, Akai has introduced a new portable color video camera which the company calls "a radical departure from conventional design and en-



gineering."

The VC-X1 camera has an autofocus system which continually adjusts the focus relative to the main subject while shooting. It also features a two-speed power telephoto lens with 6:1 zoom with macro-capability for extreme

close-up shots. An automatic iris ensures the proper exposure at all times and a 1.4 lens position allows shooting even in low light.

The Akai also features an automatic fade-in and fade-out switch, automatic white balance, electronic view-finding, and a telescopic unidirectional boom microphone. You also

can operate the camera via remote control and its reverse polarity control will convert film negatives into video tape positives. An optional interface cable allows compatibility with almost any model home VCR.

It retails at a suggested \$1150.

WAVE TO UNCLE HYMIE!

JVC's new lightweight color video camera, the GX-88U, offers home tapers a built-in viewfinder with a 1.5-inch cathode-ray tube for on-the-spot monitoring and a large through-the-lens viewfinder allows the user to see what the camera is recording while an

elongated eye-cup shields out excess light.

What else does JVC have to offer? How about two optional lenses: The GL-PO6u wide-angle conversion lens allows the shooter to experiment with depth and width of field, and the GL-PI5u teleconversion lens gives focused

shooting of distant objects. For those who like to deal with their cameras straight from the factory, the GX-88U camera is equipped with a 6x power zoom lens, controllable manually or by two zoom buttons. This lens has macro-capability, which means you can tape an object up to one and one



quarter inches from the lens surface without distortion or blurring.

A built-in color conversion filter adjusts to the change from outdoor to indoor/artificial lighting and is activated by the flip of a switch. An automatic iris control adjusts the exposure so the lens aperture matches the existing light.

Even with all this sophisticated hardware included, this camera weighs about two pounds and sells for a suggested \$1050. JVC, incidentally, says the GX-88U is intended for use with their equally new lightweight VCR.

WOTTA DISH!

Two new Earth stations for receiving direct satellite broadcast signals were recently unveiled for public consumption by Downlink, Inc. of Putnam, Connecticut.

The Skyview I is a compact eight or 12 foot spherical antenna with an aluminum reflector surface. The smaller



Skyview II is a mass produced modular design with four foot by four foot



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plastic panels that can be assembled into an eight, 12, or 16 foot spherical antenna.

Skyview I sports a support structure of redwood strips, angle iron framework, and galvanized tuning bolts. Unlike the more traditional parabolic antenna, the Skyview can receive signals from as many as seven satellites without having to be moved or realigned. The user simply moves a small feed horn Low Noise Amplifier (LNA) towards whichever satellite he wishes to tune into. Depending on the type of installation, the Skyview I retails for between \$5000 and \$7500.

PEEK-A-BOO!

Has it reached the point yet where you find yourself storing your video cassettes in the refrigerator or the bathroom? If you are an average VCR owner and you have not reached that point yet, fear not. You soon will.

With that in mind, the GUSDORF



Corporation has introduced its new VCR Tape Library, part of their line of electronic furniture. The unit stands 32½-inches high and 24½-inches wide and can store up to 168 video cassettes. Your vast collection can be hidden from prying eyes by closing the two swinging doors—each of which holds 27 tapes in storage.

The VCR Tape Library's top is designed to accommodate most VCRs with ease, and the walnut vinyl veneer is scratch resistant. Stationary glides or casters are included for your choice with the \$150 cabinet.

VCRs & DISCS

WITH A BULLET!

Though there have been over 4000 feature films marketed on video cassette in the past couple years, only 10 of that number have made it really big by hitting the \$1,000,000-plus mark in sales. According to the International Tape/Disc Association, the winners are: *Tora Tora Tora*, *M*A*S*H*, *Patton*,

The Sound of Music, *The French Connection*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Godfather*, *Godfather II*, *Hello Dolly*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind—Special Edition*.

But these Top Ten hits are not expected to remain uncontested in their superiority. Coming up fast and strong in the big buck arena are *Emmanuelle*, *Chapter Two*, *Midnight Express*, *All That Jazz*, *10*, *Superman*, *Animal House*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Star Trek*, *The Muppet Movie*, and *The Rose*.

Several sexcassettes are also hovering around the \$1,000,000 or more mark in sales, but since hard figures on hardcore are a bit more difficult to obtain, they have not made it onto the list. Still, should you be interested to see what every well-heeled VCR porno fan is buying, the top X-rated tapes are *The Devil in Miss Jones*, *Behind the Green Door*, *Deep Throat*, and *Debbie Does Dallas*.

BEATING THEM TO THE PUNCH

Magnetic Video Corporation, a subsidiary of 20th Century Fox, has announced it will begin to cut the time between the theatrical release of feature films and the release of the title for home video. Video cassettes and discs will be available 90 days after theatrical release.

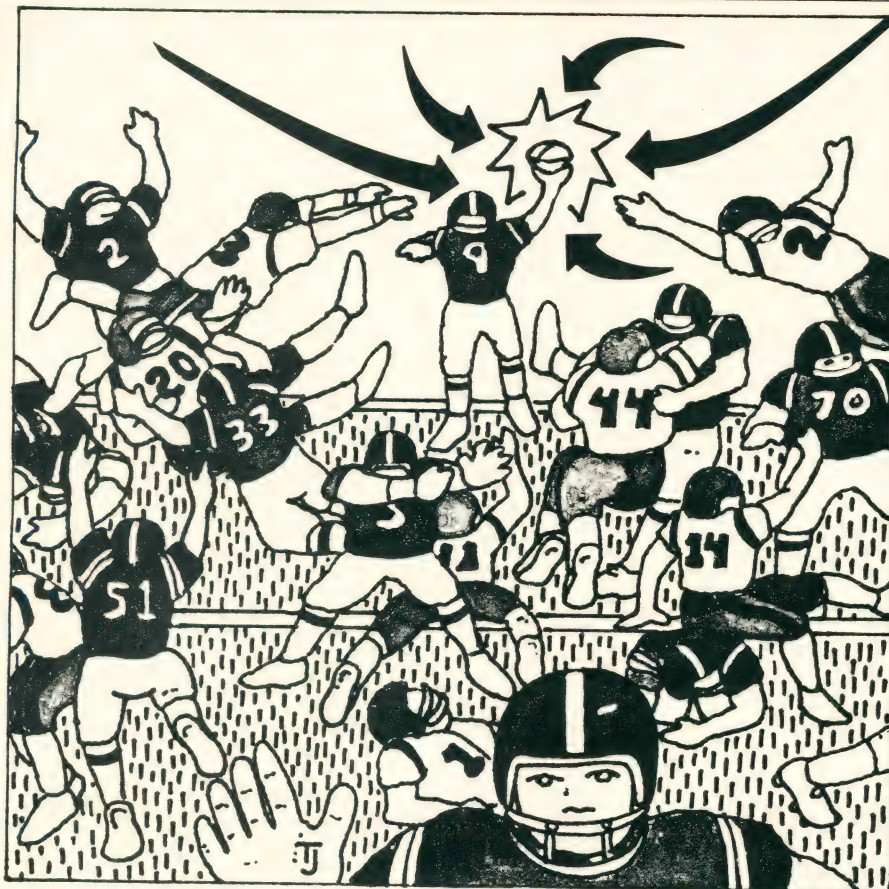
MVC President Andre Blay said that this type of marketing will continue to take advantage of a film's advertising and promotion while it is in the theaters. It is also expected to cut down drastically on video piracy.

The thinking at Magnetic Video is that piracy tends to occur most frequently when there is a long period of time between theatrical and video cassette release. If a film is popular but unavailable on legitimate pre-recorded tapes, people will buy from pirates. Video pirates, in other words, will lose their illegal market unless they are willing to sell their illicit wares for less than the authorized versions. That is unlikely to happen, MVC feels.

So far, Magnetic Video is the only organization to take this step but, if it proves successful, other prerecorded tape distributors are sure to follow their lead.

I USE MY EYES, MYSELF

The videodisc is opening vast new horizons in the realm of instructional and educational software. Until now, however, such software was being produced only for institutional or industrial use. The Optical Programming Association (OPA) has changed that with the release of the first



programmed instructional (laser optical) videodisc for the consumer market.

How to Watch Pro Football is an hour-long program that retails for \$24.95 and features seven professional football coaches telling you what you should look for while watching a game. Featured are Dick Vermeil of the Philadelphia Eagles, Don Shula of the Dolphins, Dallas Cowboy's

Tom Landry, and Steelers' coach Chuck Noll.

OPA has also issued a second instructional disc about children's games with plans for an estimated six more educational programs to follow over the course of the year. No word on a how to avoid watching Howard Cosell videodisc.

JUST HUM ALONG IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE WORDS

You can expect to see a slew of musical video cassettes and discs from CBS Video Enterprises in the coming months. The company has announced it will be producing a series of "live" musical video programs with recording artists from the CBS labels at the Soundworks/Studio 54 facility in New York.

To sweeten the sounds that much more, CBS will record the programs in digital stereo, casting an eye towards future pay cable, video cassette, and other video tape markets.

Also included in the series will be several concerts by as of yet unnamed artists at as yet undisclosed locations. The proper announcements concerning these mystery programs will be made as plans progress.

The folks at Soundworks recently produced Steely Dan's top-of-the-

charts album, *Gaucho*, as well as a video program, *James Brown—Live at Studio 54*, which will be syndicated later this year.

GIVE 'EM A QUARTER-INCH AND THEY WANT THE MARKET

Technicolor's new 1/4-inch video tape recorder is trying to make inroads into the prerecorded tape market. Until now, all that was available in the 1/4-inch market was the 30-minute blank tape selling for \$8.95. But in the course of the next several months, the Technicolor people will be introducing software for their portable VCR.

They will begin duplicating and distributing tapes of 20 famous National Football League games later this year with plans calling for additional material soon after. Technicolor is also coming out with blank 45-minute and one hour tapes in a few weeks.

They are, it seems, determined to

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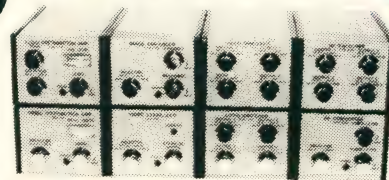
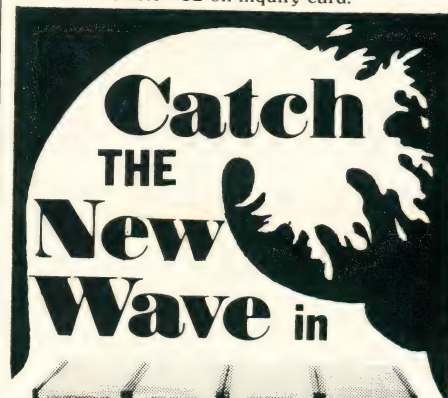
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carve themselves a substantial niche in the home video market against all comers, be they VHS or Beta.

AND THE OVERCOAT MANUFACTURERS EXPECT PLUMMETING SALES

The porno theater in America may go the way of the dinosaur if recent Supreme Court actions concerning the legality of local anti-smut zoning laws are any indication of things to come.

The Court has refused in recent months to review lower court findings which upheld the community standards laws. It is expected as a result of this similar ordinances will begin popping up across the land. Already a process of attrition has hit the porno theater industry, with more than 50 adult entertainment theaters going out of business in the last year or so.

One expected result of this is that theatrical sex films may shift almost entirely to the home video market, perhaps as soon as two to three years hence, according to lawyers for the Adult Film Association of America (AFAA). The AFAA expects the law will not—indeed cannot—touch home porno thanks to ample legal safeguards that exist against government intervention in the home.

Besides, watching porno at home is less embarrassing and much more fun.

FROM THE COUNTRY THAT GAVE US SIR FRANCIS DRAKE . . .

The Conservative government of England will publish a green paper—Great Britain's equivalent to our white paper—this spring which will examine the question of off-the-air video recording in Great Britain. It is expected this report could lead to some legislation which would cause steep rises in the cost of either equipment or tape, or the introduction of an expensive new recording license.

The green paper—which will also take a look at audio recording—has been announced prior to its release because of fears on the part of the television, film, and record industries. Together, they feel they are losing approximately \$450,000,000 a year in royalties and licensing fees because of people using tape and video recorders.

Over 72,000,000 blank audio and video tapes of all kinds were sold in England in 1980. Large numbers of those tapes were used to tape television broadcasts of films and shows or record albums without any royalties going to the artists or producers of the material. This practice has rendered useless the Dramatic and Musical

Performers' Act of 1958 which was enacted to prevent artists' work from being resold or hired without their permission and without payment of royalties.

Still, legislation to restore these royalties has been discussed numerous times in the past without any discernable effect. It remains to be seen whether the green paper will do what could not be done in the past.

The green paper's impact on U.S. copyright law also remains to be seen.

FOR THE BIRDS

We have seen the future and it is an interactive videodisc.

It may be a sign of the shape of videodiscs to come when software producers and book publishers join forces to create "video books" on disc. The first to do so is BBI Communications, Inc. and the Houghton Mifflin Company. Together they will produce a videodisc based on *A Field Guide to Birds*, a 2,000,000 copy Houghton

Mifflin best-seller by Roger Tory Peterson.

The 54-minute program—covering both sides of the disc—will employ the laser optical format. The producers have been working on the ornithological presentation for several months, collecting over 150,000 feet of film of birds from around the globe in their natural habitats. Thanks to the wonders of laser optical disc technology, the little critters' tweets and chirps will be in melodious stereo sound.

Another joint venture between BBI and Houghton Mifflin allows matters to flow from video to print. Plans call for BBI to create a disc based on its Boston outlet, WCVB-TV's *Miller's Law*, by Harvard Law School Professor Arthur Miller. Houghton will base and distribute a book on the educational series.

If these initial offerings go well, we may soon be seeing a whole line of video books. The only trouble with it is the discs are next to impossible to read on the bus in the morning.



WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK WITH THE VERDICT AFTER A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

Remember how the tension would mount in the courtroom as Perry Mason asked the stenographer to read back a crucial portion of testimony? Well, that sort of thing may be left behind in old movies and television shows if predictions by Dan Roberts of the U.S. JVC Corporation come true.

Video, according to Roberts, may one day render the role of court stenographer obsolete. Commenting recently on the subject he said, "Since the first use of video tape in a trial in Federal Court in 1968, the advances in video technology have closely paralleled the acceptance of video in the legal industry. At the same time the civil courts of this country have

become increasingly backlogged with trials."

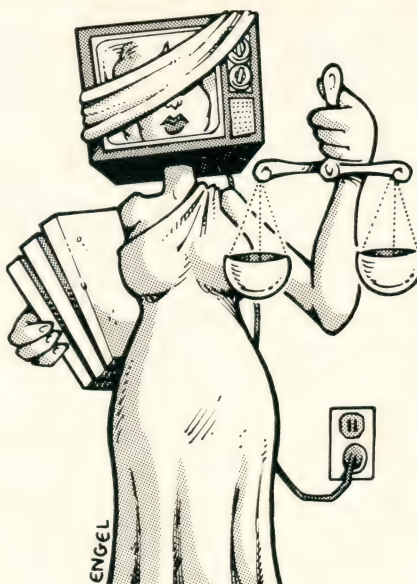
Roberts went on to explain the need for speeding up court calendars has resulted in an increasing acceptance of taped testimony by witnesses under oath somewhere other than in the courtroom. Employing video tape eliminates many of the inaccuracies encountered by the legal community in stenographic depositions, Roberts said. Video also lets the jury "see everything they would in a live appearance (by a witness)—the blush, the smile, the perspiration, or the smirk."

According to Roberts, video also can eliminate the inconvenience of a live appearance by a witness during the week during working hours when court is normally in session.

Roberts also pointed to the use of video to document more fully personal

injury cases. He used as illustration the case of a 16 year old boy from Connecticut who was left paralyzed and semi-comatose after an incident at a New York summer camp. The case was settled out of court for \$3,000,000 after a video tape was presented showing the boy's average daily treatments, the extent of his injuries, and the affect they had on his family. The defendants decided to settle rather than risk a higher award by a jury who would have had to view the tape during a trial.

"It would not be illogical," Roberts stated, "to perdict a 'video court' for the future. It would include cameras and VCRs to record the action, monitors, and projectors to display depositions, testimony, taped demonstrations, and other evidence. The trial record itself would also be on tape, and perhaps even some of the legal counsel could be performed through live video links to another location."



No doubt Perry Mason would object. Strenuously.

KISSING IS GOOD . . . BUT NO HITTING!

Those Swedish are quite a people. Their country is almost synonymous with a certain genre of filmed and photographed literature that features sexual activity, yet they turn quite squeamish when the subject turns to violence.

That is why the Swedish government is in the process of drafting legislation to include prerecorded video cassettes under the existing motion picture censorship laws. Lawmakers want to stop the growing practice of selling and renting violent films to minors.

The Swedes already have among the most severe restrictions on cinematic violence in the Western world.

WHAT EVERY WELL STOCKED VIDEO LIBRARY SHOULD HAVE

Movies have the Oscars. Television has the Emmys. Even commercials have the Cleos, so why shouldn't video software get its share of award-winning glory? The National Video Clearing House has released the nominations for this year's second annual Vidi Awards. So without further ado, the nominees are:

* *The Last Art Student Has Been Eaten*, wherein an artist proceeds to consume his students one by one.

* *The Egg and the Eye*, an in-depth study of the humble egg and its influence on art and literature.

* *Sheep, Sheep, Sheep*, a short treatment about the moods, rhythms, and images of sheep—without nar-

If these censorship statutes were to be extended to the realm of home video, Sweden would be the first democratic nation to dictate to its people what they could or could not watch in the privacy of their homes.

The police have been getting into the act along with the legislature. After a recent Swedish television report on the widespread rental of video violence to youngsters, the cops raided a number of video stores and impounded the offending flicks—*Tool Box Murderer* and *The Bogey Man* among them. Video cassette retailers began voluntarily to restrict the sale of these and other films to persons over 18 years old. As an extra precaution, some renters have taken to charging as much as \$100 for such fare.

ration.

* *Funny Body*, a hopefully tasteful treatment of coughing, sneezing, yawning, hiccuping, and the various other bodily eruptions all flesh is heir to.

* *The Cast Iron Story*, or everything you have ever wanted to know about cast iron bathtubs, and then some.

* *Molasses and the American Heritage*, a patriotic salute to the ever-popular molasses and its integral relationship to American society.

* *BLT*, the sentimental favorite of the group follows the genesis of a baby pig as it grows into a strong, assertive adult and than a complacent component of a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

Producers of the nominated video tapes are waiting with great expecta-

tion to find out who among them will win this year's crown from last year's winner—Hush Hoggies Hush: Tom Johnson's Praying Pigs.

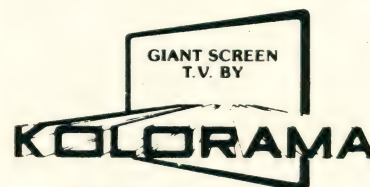
See what you're missing if you don't own a VCR?

CABLE

WE ALSO SERVE THOSE WHO SIT AND COMPUTE

It seems the Warner-Amex Cable QUBE interactive system is a resounding success. It has been received well in its initial run in Columbus, Ohio and currently is being installed in many cities across the country. Now, in Columbus, Warner-Amex is adding yet another dimension to QUBE.

QUBE subscribers will be offered an information retrieval system through CompuServe, Inc. and Atari, another Warner subsidiary, as a third system. A wide variety of consumer oriented data will be available to subscribers through their television sets. The banks of information include "electronic pages" from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, *The San Francisco*



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Data concerning such areas as up-to-the-minute news and weather, sports scores and schedules, recipes, nutritional information, financial news, and movie reviews will be a key touch away from subscribers. QUBE also will offer an electronic message sending and receiving system, as well as certain Atari video games. An Atari 800 home computer, incidently, is a necessary component in this set-up.

CompuServe will be on line from between 6:00 PM and 5:00 AM week-

**GEORGE RAFT FANS
PLEASE NOTE**

Video Communications, Inc. of Tulsa is planning a 24-hour cable service consisting of nothing but B movies from their library of hundreds of such films. Cable operators will be charged between 10¢ and 15¢ per subscriber per month.

So if melodrama and suspense are your cup of tea, head on out to Tulsa. They've got plenty of it there.

Ted Turner, President and Chairman of the Board of the Turner Broadcasting System (WTBS-TV in Atlanta, Georgia and the Cable News Network) presided over the January 8 installation of a 4.5 meter earth station antenna on Capital Hill. Now members of the Congress can tune into themselves on either C-Span—the television service that carries the goings-on of the House of Representatives—or watch Turner's 24-hour Cable News Network (CNN).

"Many government officials have expressed interest in being able to monitor our 24-hour news service," Turner beamed. "I'm happy to be able to provide this capability."

CNN also offered the White House a similar gift, though they have yet to take him up on it. Maybe if they started running Bonzo flicks . . .

With every new administration in Washington comes all kinds of changes. And if the new Senate majority leader, Senator Howard Baker (R-Tennessee) has his way, an even bigger change may be coming to the Congress—live television coverage of the United States Senate may be on the air within

Senator Baker realizes that there are several matters that must be taken into consideration before the cameras begin to roll on the floor of the Senate. First and foremost, who would operate all the equipment it will take to cover the Senate? The Senators could opt for a plan similar to that used by C-Span and install and operate the system on an in-House basis. Or they could decide to choose an outside organization to take on the technical work and run the show.

Outsiders tend to present a slight difficulty. The House allows the C-Span cameras to record only recognized speakers on the floor and not those members who, though on the floor, are catching a nap or keeping up with the daily racing form.

Senator Baker may want to test out his new political powers as majority leader by pushing his televising bill through during the current session. All that remains to ponder is just how well Baker expects to do in the Nielsens during the current season.



BROADCAST

REACH OUT AND TOUCH SOMEONE

More than 100,000 television viewers in the Los Angeles area donned funny plastic glasses to view a 3-D presentation of *Miss Sadie Thompson* last December 19. Viewers are reported to have responded enthusiastically to the sight of Rita Hayworth popping in and out of their screens and are now anxiously awaiting the arrival of a 3-D Robert Stack in *Bwana Devil*.

It may not be long before the rest of us will be able to enjoy such fare as Dorothy and Toto scurrying around—albeit all only several inches high—our living rooms, or the little Texas chainsaw goon coming after us in our own homes.

The people who are bringing about this resurgence of 3-D films envision a total “stereoscopic” video future for us all. The 3-D Video Corporation of North Hollywood is working away to come up with a practical system that could be used worldwide and present “true” in-depth presentations on the tube.

Such a system would use polarized lenses and a television set costing a



few hundred dollars more than conventional two dimensional sets. They envision a time when 3-D can be viewed without eyestrain or headache—which, after the thrill wore off was the major gripe about 3-D in the 1950s—and would allow the viewer to enjoy the special effect from any location in the viewing area. This will come about once they overcome the problem of color and picture resolu-

tion and can film the 3-D fare as clearly and cleanly as we are accustomed to on the currently superior 2-D sets.

The 3-D Video Corporation folks are also working on a system that would offer us live presentations in 3-D. They want to bring the action out of the screen to within inches of our eyes and would afford us the pleasure of peering deep within the screen.

FARRAH FAWCETT GOES ON DIET... FILM AT ELEVEN!

Not content to keep the competition confined to the supermarket check-out counter, the *National Enquirer* has announced plans to follow rival weekly tabloid *The Star* to television.

Should the *Enquirer's* plans come to fruition, the broadcast version of the tabloid would join *The Star*, *Real People*, *That's Incredible*, and *Those Amazing Animals* in the fastest growing television genre, nonfiction masquerading as news.

The *Enquirer's* owners and operators are said to be seriously discussing producing an initial 13-week trial run of the show, with the paper's publisher demanding creative and editorial control of the show's contents. An *Enquirer* spokesman said the publisher is demanding such controls over the series because he fears without it the program could otherwise turn out to be “schlock.”

There is good reason for the publisher to want to keep a firm grasp on the show's helm—he has thusfar been able to steer the *National Enquirer* into nearly 5.2 million hands every

week. A large “readership” on the tube—should the show be equally successful in television terms—would mean many, many more readers for the tabloid.

GOOD MORNING GREAT BRITAIN.

Thanks to such presentations as PBS's *Masterpiece Theater*, America has an image of Great Britain as a land of prestigious television productions. But this image has been taking a beating lately, mainly due to the growing influence of American television. In October of last year, for example, an independent London station ran Britain's first telethon and raised nearly \$3,000,000 for a children's charity in the London area alone. That may not be quite up to Jerry Lewis standards, but it is an impressive start nonetheless.

Now it has been announced that by 1983 Britain is to begin early morning breakfast broadcasting. Unlike our domestic formatting, the majority of British programming does not begin until about noon and is generally off the air by midnight.

Several companies put in bids for

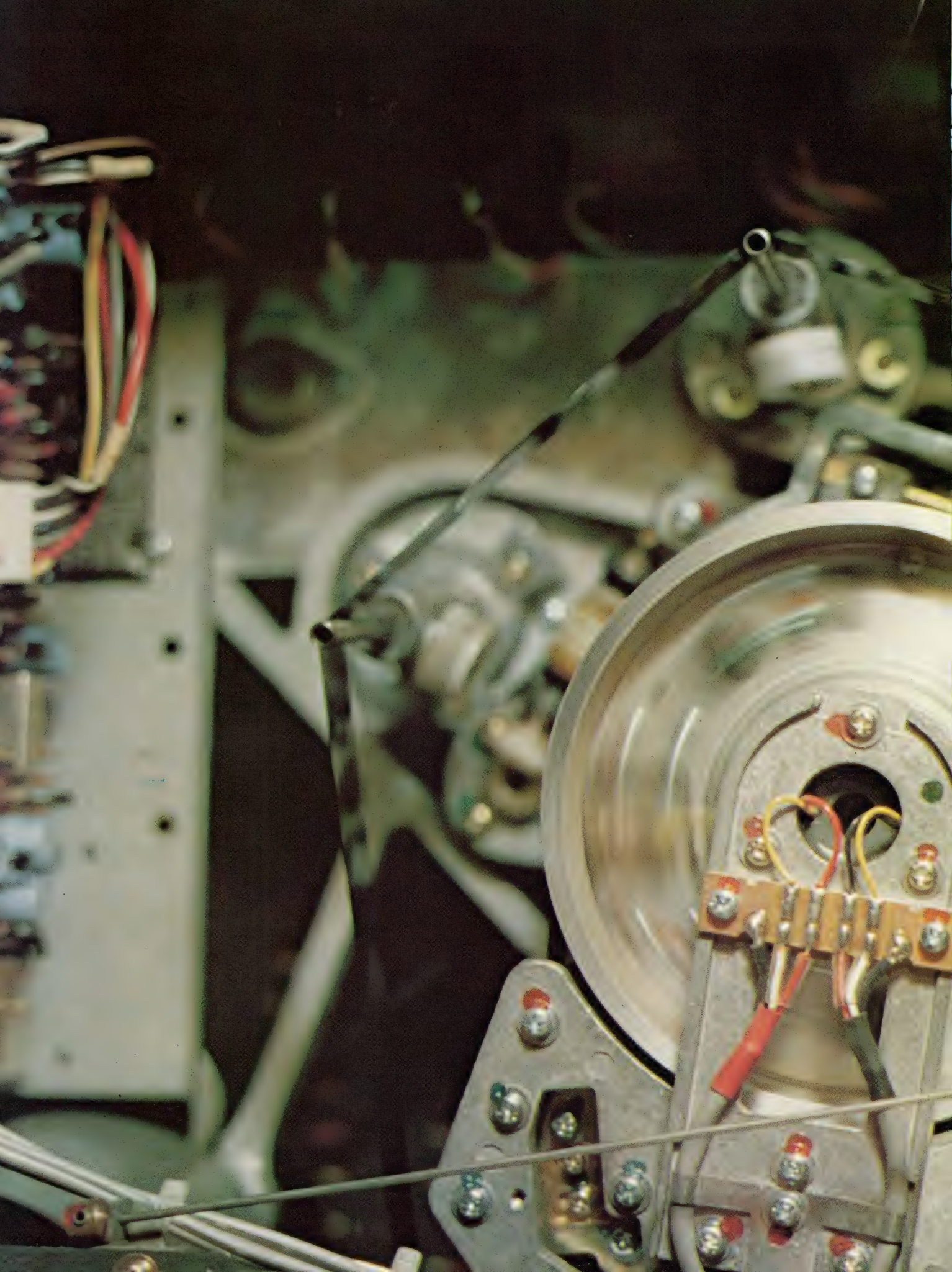
the morning franchise offered by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. TV-AM, a company headed by former British ambassador to Washington Peter Jay, came out on top. David Frost and several other well-known British television personalities have been lined up to appear.

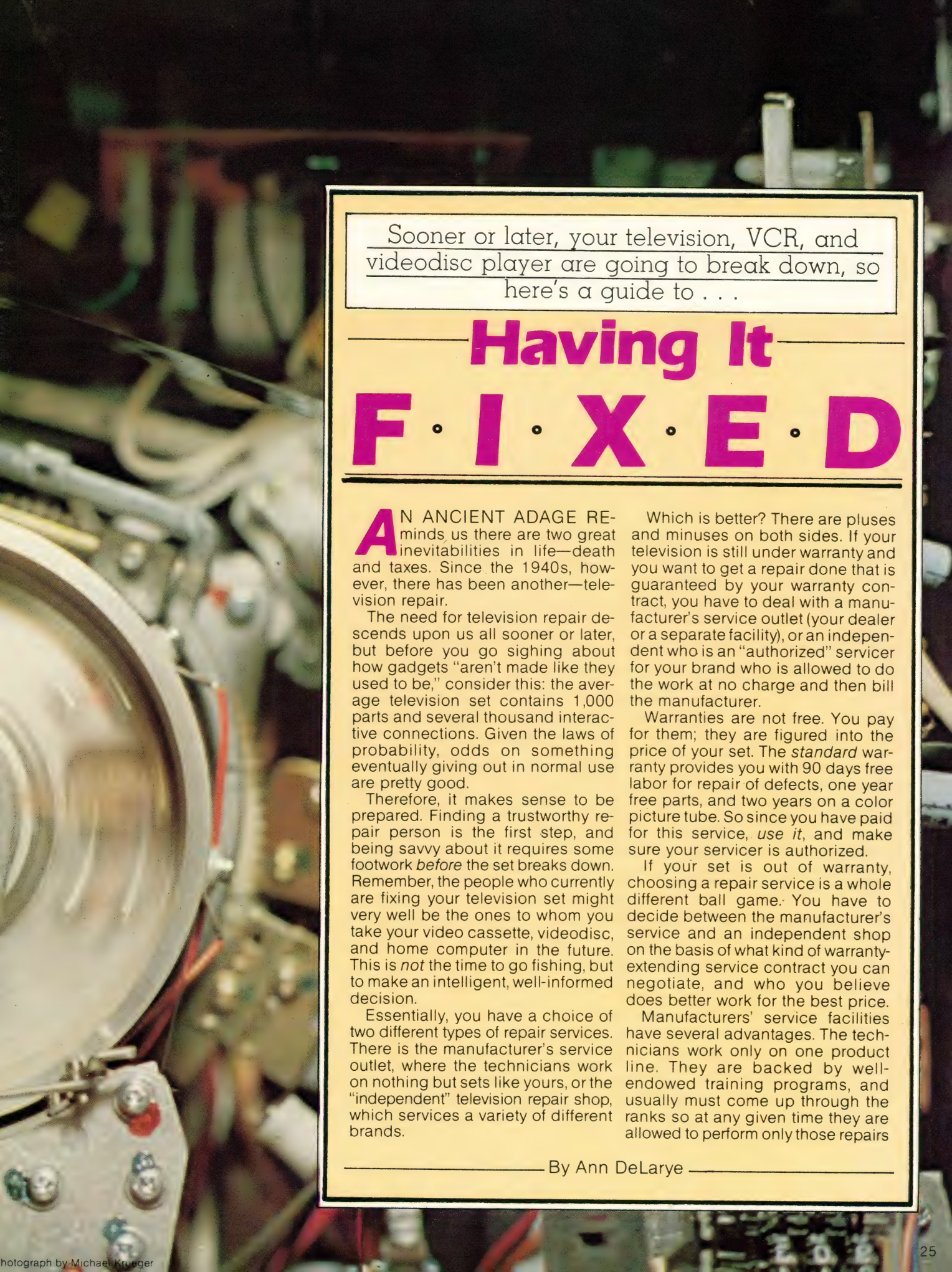
The new service will broadcast seven days a week from 6:15 to 9:15 AM weekdays, 6:45 to 9:15 AM Saturdays, and 7:15 to 9:15 AM on Sundays. The British can expect to see much the same type of broadcast programming as appears on American breakfast time television: a mixture of news, sports, community information, and magazine material. TV-AM is expecting to shell out \$24,000,000 to get the service on the air.

Never one to let the opposition get too far ahead, the BBC has promised to do some form of early television programming itself, gearing to start in 1982. They plan to televise part of their already successful morning radio service.

Now all that remains to be done is to convince the British public it wants to watch television with its morning porridge.

(Continued on page 30)





Sooner or later, your television, VCR, and videodisc player are going to break down, so here's a guide to . . .

Having It F • I • X • E • D

AN ANCIENT ADAGE REMINDS us there are two great inevitabilities in life—death and taxes. Since the 1940s, however, there has been another—television repair.

The need for television repair descends upon us all sooner or later, but before you go sighing about how gadgets “aren’t made like they used to be,” consider this: the average television set contains 1,000 parts and several thousand interactive connections. Given the laws of probability, odds on something eventually giving out in normal use are pretty good.

Therefore, it makes sense to be prepared. Finding a trustworthy repair person is the first step, and being savvy about it requires some footwork *before* the set breaks down. Remember, the people who currently are fixing your television set might very well be the ones to whom you take your video cassette, videodisc, and home computer in the future. This is *not* the time to go fishing, but to make an intelligent, well-informed decision.

Essentially, you have a choice of two different types of repair services. There is the manufacturer’s service outlet, where the technicians work on nothing but sets like yours, or the “independent” television repair shop, which services a variety of different brands.

Which is better? There are pluses and minuses on both sides. If your television is still under warranty and you want to get a repair done that is guaranteed by your warranty contract, you have to deal with a manufacturer’s service outlet (your dealer or a separate facility), or an independent who is an “authorized” servicer for your brand who is allowed to do the work at no charge and then bill the manufacturer.

Warranties are not free. You pay for them; they are figured into the price of your set. The *standard* warranty provides you with 90 days free labor for repair of defects, one year free parts, and two years on a color picture tube. So since you have paid for this service, *use it*, and make sure your servicer is authorized.

If your set is out of warranty, choosing a repair service is a whole different ball game: You have to decide between the manufacturer’s service and an independent shop on the basis of what kind of warranty-extending service contract you can negotiate, and who you believe does better work for the best price.

Manufacturers’ service facilities have several advantages. The technicians work only on one product line. They are backed by well-endowed training programs, and usually must come up through the ranks so at any given time they are allowed to perform only those repairs

—By Ann DeLarye—

they are judged competent to do. Manufacturers' servicers almost always are the first to teach their technicians how to handle a new product line, although their training programs are open to independents as well. Manufacturers' service shops always replace worn-out parts with parts manufactured by that company for that set.

Independents, on the other hand, charge less than manufacturers because they do not have such high overhead, but independents will not always replace parts with identical pieces made by the same manufacturer. Frank J. Moch, executive director of the National Association of Television and Electronic Servicers of America (NATESA), explains why this can be advantageous: "An independent will use the best available components. A manufacturer's service operation will only use their own brand. For example, one manufacturer was having trouble with a deflection yoke. At the factory service operation, when the yoke broke down, the customer would just get another one. But an independent was able to go out and buy a far superior part."

Whether you decide to have your repair done by a factory service operation or an independent shop, you should always *check them out first*. Know who you are dealing with.

One person who knows this lesson from experience is June Raufer, assistant manager of the commercial department of Chicago's Better Business Bureau. Raufer's job is to deal with consumer complaints on appliances like television sets.

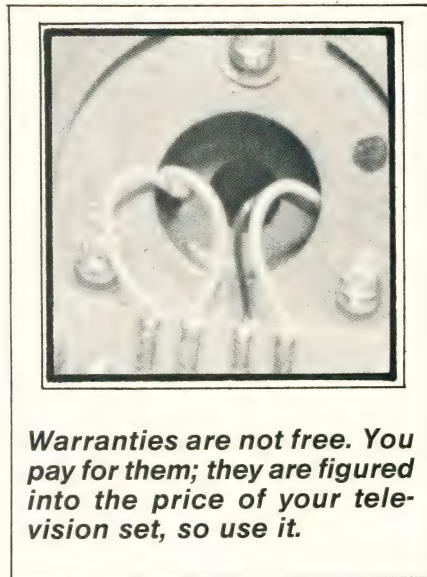
"It is important people pick a reputable dealer," she emphasizes. "In essence, you are relying on the expertise of the person handling your television. Too frequently people will just open the phone book and pick whomever has the largest ad.

"If I was picking out a TV repair person, I would talk to as many friends and neighbors as possible first thing. Normally you can get good referrals through people you know—that is how I found mine. Too often I talk to people filing a complaint who say 'I have since talked to people and they had problems with the same company.' The talking should be done *before*."

Sometimes this is not possible, and the yellow pages become a person's guide to choosing a repair facility. The big ads, of course, attract attention but should not be used as the sole basis on which to judge the merits of a particular

servicer, either independent or manufacturer-maintained.

"The customer should make certain he notes the size of the ads," cautions NATESA's Frank J. Moch. "We have here in Chicago, for instance, one company that is carrying three $\frac{3}{8}$ pages of advertising in the yellow pages. Those ads cost them at least \$1500 a month! In order to amortize that cost, the company would have to have a very heavy load of service work, other-



Warranties are not free. You pay for them; they are figured into the price of your television set, so use it.

wise the cost per job performed would be quite considerable.

"Visit the company with a big ad. Take a look at the place. See if they have the manpower and facilities to handle a large volume of service. Considering the average technician may complete five jobs a day, divide that into the dollars of the total cost of the ad and then you get some idea how much each job would have to run to support the cost of the advertising."

Once you have several places under consideration, do some specific comparison shopping. June Raufer advises, "Get it narrowed down to a few places, call your local Better Business Bureau to find out what information we have available on them, and then call the company and ask if they have a standardized fee for service, parts, and labor."

Perhaps most importantly, ask what the shop charges for an estimate. Many people do not realize that in most cases, even if you decide not to have any work done on your television, you must still pay a flat fee for the estimate. Sometimes you can get a free estimate, but be wary. Unscrupulous dealers use the lure of free estimates or low-priced general service packages to attract you.

"People who think they can buy service for \$10 or even \$20 an hour are making a very serious and dangerous mistake," advises Moch.

When it comes to independents, how can you tell the difference between an ethical shop and a shady operation? Looks are deceiving. Advertising can be misleading. One way of judging is finding out whether the dealer is a member of the National Association of Television and Electronics Servicers of America. NATESA requires its members to subscribe to a code of ethics, and it polices those ethics to insure the association's reputation. Moch claims, "There was a time in the earlier days of television when there were more complaints, but usually this was because of the newness of the art. Today, complaints about members are infinitesimal." NATESA also helps consumers with complaints involving non-NATESA-affiliated repair operations.

Once you have made your choice, you have still to present yourself as a knowledgeable customer to get the best possible service and respect from a repair person.

Having taken the above-suggested steps in finding a repair shop puts you ahead. You will be able to approach that facility calmly and without hostility born of suspicion. Then it becomes a matter of negotiating specifics.

If you ask for a house call—even if just for an estimate—you will likely be billed for a "trip charge" to cover technician travel and work time, gas, truck maintenance, and the like. Find out what that charge will be before they come.

Find out what your estimate will cost on both a house call and a shop visit.

When the symptoms have been discussed and an agreeable estimate made, request that your bill be itemized, and ask to get any replaced parts given back to you.

The itemized bill will tell you exactly what the technician did to your set and how much each repair and part cost you. You may not be able to tell just from looking at your bill whether you are being gouged—particularly if you are not technically-inclined—but you will have two points in your favor. An itemized bill will make your technician think twice about doing unnecessary repairs and you will have something in writing to show a knowledgeable second party if you think there has been foul play.

Having your parts given back to you will help ensure they indeed

have been replaced and not just dusted off.

This bit of advice has some exceptions. A set under warranty may have its parts sent back to the manufacturer for retesting. Some parts, like the picture tube, are rebuildable, and because you are required to part with them, you should be compensated with a reduced fee for the repair. Confirm this.

You rarely will get a picture tube

Raufer. "What most people assume to be a long time is not, really. I have some problems where the manufacturer will not supply the parts, or the part is on back order. I have had people very upset if their set is in the shop five days! I have also heard from people legitimately upset when the television has been in the shop six or seven months.

"There is a time period, but it depends on the individual repair. So

the National Association of Television and Electronics Servicers, you can contact their national headquarters at 5930 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, Illinois 60629, (312) 582-6350. They also welcome inquiries about non-affiliated servicers and will tell you where to go for help. "We believe that in order for businesses to survive and prosper, they must have good relations with their customers. The customer must be treated

THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU.

Consult your local telephone directory or dial information of the nearest large town or city. They will direct you to any local governmental agencies available should you need further help, and they have several outlined programs to assist you in solving your complaint before it reaches that level.

THE MANUFACTURER

of your television set. See the address in your service manual and direct your complaint to the consumer affairs division.

WHERE TO GO WITH TELEVISION REPAIR COMPLAINTS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TELEVISION AND ELECTRONICS SERVICERS OF AMERICA.

5930 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, Illinois 60629
(312) 582-6350

For complaints about independent television facilities.

VIDEO ACTION EXPRESS.

21 West Elm Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610
Video Action's new consumer action service will do its utmost to help you directly or put you in touch with the right people in your area.

back. They are dangerous. Martin J. Barnabic, vice president of consumer affairs and industry relations for the RCA Service Company, explains: "A picture tube is a piece of glass that has a vacuum inside. Modern safety features limit the shattering of the glass so that it is less dangerous today than it was 20 years ago, but it is still not something you would want to have around the house.

"And they do rebuild them to be virtually as good as a new tube."

If you have your picture tube replaced while it is still under warranty, read your warranty sheet very carefully to determine whether you are entitled to a completely new tube or "either a new or rebuilt one." Many manufacturers have been known to qualify their warranties with this last phrase. Rebuilt tubes may very well be as good as new, but if having one bothers you, you should let your servicer know before he replaces it.

Another, and very important, question to ask is how long the television is expected to be in the shop. One of the most frequent complaints fielded by the Better Business Bureau has to do with the length of time a television is held by a servicer.

"It is difficult to say how long a television repair should take," admits

ask for a written estimate, not only of what is wrong with the item, but an approximate date when they expect the item should be repaired. Have it written on the receipt."

Taking such precautions as checking around for a reputable dealer, getting an itemized bill and so on should do much to keep television repair costs within reasonable limits. But what are those limits? What can be reasonably expected, and what is too much, particularly these days?

Frank Moch advises those using independents: "If the customer pays anywhere from \$24 to \$35 an hour and gets good service from a good company, he should be very pleased."

Manufacturers' repair centers charge more because of their higher wages, benefits, executive compensation, and in-house training programs. "Our price book right now is predicated on about \$40 an hour," reports RCA's Barnabic, "but the first half hour may be higher because of costs involved that must be met up front."

Even if you take all outlined precautions, you may still run into what you feel is a raw deal. In this case, you do have options.

If you have been dealing with an independent operation affiliated with

properly, and receive professional-caliber service," Moch states.

The Better Business Bureau has specific procedures for dealing with television repair complaints:

"Basically, we get people to fill out a written complaint form," Raufer explains. "Then we notify the company and, hopefully, through mediation the complaint can be resolved. Our main thrust is to bring the problem to the right person's attention.

"We depend upon the business' cooperation in resolving complaints. If they do not want to cooperate, our hands are tied. We will close the complaint as unsettled and that would be reflected in the company's reports to anyone who inquires.

"A consumer who does not get satisfaction through the Better Business Bureau is left to go through Small Claims Court. If there was fraud involved, they may be referred to a state or municipal agency."

In some communities the Better Business Bureau also offers legally-binding arbitration. The consumer and the servicer sign an agreement to abide by the decision of an impartial Better Business arbiter. This avoids going to Small Claims Court.

What if you cannot determine whether you are being "taken" or

not? The complexity of today's television sets makes repairs much more difficult to render, and the same symptoms can appear for a variety of different problems.

"Most of the complaints I've received here recently," notes Raufer, "have been repair problems where the same symptom recurs but it's an

are not quite proper, and I would say 100% of the major manufacturers are at fault in this situation. Say a consumer has never had a color set before or he lives in an area where there is a problem with interference so he cannot get a good picture. He demands service, but the manufacturers do not pay for it.

to train for the number of machines you build. If you train everybody, the cost is phenomenal, and by the time they get a machine to work on, they forget what you taught them!

"For the VCRs we started with fifty locations nationally and today I can say to you that every single RCA facility has at least one fully-trained

"People who think they can buy service for \$10 or even \$20 an hour are making a very serious and dangerous mistake."

additional problem. So you go in for one repair and the TV set comes back with the same problem and must go in again for additional work, back and forth." The customer gets angry and frustrated, and even highly ethical service people begin to be suspected of negligence. RCA's Barnabic puts the situation into perspective.

"When a newer set fails, you have a complex piece of machinery that is difficult to diagnose. You need a more astute technician."

Backing that technician, Barnabic adds, is more complex diagnostic equipment to analyze the interaction of the many different circuits and connections. Problem analysis can be a lengthy, tedious process on the newer sets.

Fortunately, such analysis is needed less frequently today than on older sets. Barnabic recalls, "Television repairs today are less frequent. I'll hear people tell me the old cliché that 'they do not make them as good as they used to.' The facts are that way back at the beginning, we used to render up to six calls average each year! Today, the incidence rate is less than one call a year. People have short memories."

The service industry has its problems, too, and one of the major ones is termed the "nuisance call." This is a call made in response to a consumer complaint where nothing is found to be wrong with the set. Perhaps the plug is not in the socket, the antenna not correctly aligned, or the fine tuning has been tampered with. These calls are *not* covered by your warranty.

This makes independent servicers unhappy because they cannot get reimbursement for their call from either the manufacturer or the customer. NATESA's Frank Moch describes the situation: "The limited warranties that the manufacturers all are providing (which exclude reimbursement for 'nuisance calls')

"We feel the customer is not buying a mere black box with knobs on it; he is buying performance, and if he does not get it he has every right to complain. Invariably the service shoulders the cost, and it runs to a considerable loss that gets spread out to higher service costs for everybody."

RCA's Barnabic rebuts with the manufacturer's point of view: "The manufacturer guarantees his product is not defective. If you forget to plug it into the wall and the technician shows up and finds that it is not the television set, the manufacturer says 'Why in the world should I pay for that?' Really, a dealer delivering a set should possibly plug it in and see that it is set up properly. Some of them make arrangements with service companies to go and do this."

To keep yourself from being in the middle of this kind of ticklish situation (and possibly the target of a bill for service not covered by warranty) call the person who sold you the television set *first*.

Do not fiddle with any knobs before you know what they are designed to do. Read your owner's manual, check to see that the television is plugged in, your antenna is properly installed and all outside connections are secure.

The television service industry has not been lax in preparing for the mass introduction of the new technologies. Although it is not economically feasible to train every technician before a new product is introduced, there is usually a national network of trained people available by the time any new product hits the market.

Barnabic describes how RCA handled the need for trained technicians when they put out their video cassette recorder line. "Technicians are trained by the time a new technology hits the market. You have to decide how many technicians

individual to service these machines."

Independents are servicing the newer technologies, too, with technicians trained at the same seminars as the manufacturers' own. Moch confirms, "We are already involved in repair of video cassette and videodisc machines. We make a big drive to get at people to study these particular phases. Our people are even involved with home computer technology."

"NATESA has a certification program and as the technology changes, the people who submit to the test will get a certificate that approves their capability of handling that device. Video tape machines are already a part of our testing system; the videodisc and home computers will follow in due time."

Barnabic explains what a consumer with a VCR should expect in the way of service.

"The VCR is a machine that needs more maintenance than a television set—or practically any other home appliance. It is a very intricate machine. The average is one call every 14 or 15 months, depending on the usage and where you keep this unit. It is highly susceptible to dust and abuse."

"Some people abuse the item and do not even realize they are doing it. But it will require routine maintenance on a continuing basis."

"Service costs for a VCR over a television set are not higher on an hourly basis, but it does require more time. If you have a technician on the bench working on VCRs and color sets, he may finish three or four VCRs as opposed to six color sets. Obviously, the price for the four VCRs has to cover the whole day."

This basic consumer guide should help make video repair *almost* painless. If you have any further questions about, or unusual experiences with television repair, send them to this magazine's new consumer action service, *Video Action Express*, 21 West Elm, Chicago, Illinois 60610. ■

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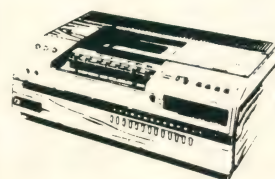
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SATELLITES

THE COLD WAR... FLASH GORDON STYLE

What with *Star Wars* and *Flash Gordon* and the like dominating the movie screen these days, we are all getting used to the idea of warfare in space, even though we know it is just science fiction. But fiction is quickly becoming reality and that has got the U.S. Senate interested.

Senator Larry Pressler (R.-South Dakota) has proposed hearings on so-called "killer satellites" he believes could threaten the telecommunications health of the United States. Pressler is concerned with this because satellites are playing an ever increasing role in our communications systems, from public and private data transfer to the broadcasting of television signals and defense messages.

With so much riding on those geostationary birds, the Senator has cause for worry. It is known that the Soviet Union already has the capability to intercept and destroy satellites, as their tests on these systems have been monitored. That leaves our satellites in a vulnerable position since there are, at present, no effective safeguards against such attacks.

Pressler points out the Senate has never fully explored the area of communications satellite security. The disruption of our satellite communications network could severely affect international commercial transactions and undermine much of the military's effectiveness. Pressler would like to see some sort of international treaty for satellite protection.

QUICK OFFICER— FOLLOW THAT SATELLITE!

It seems for every step up in the vast video revolution, there is a corresponding rise in the number of video pirates and the technology for them to commit their electronic pillage. That worries the Comsat Corporation, proponents of direct broadcast satellites (DBS). Comsat envisions a time—circa 1990—when every home in the nation will have its own satellite dish antenna on the roof (as reported last issue). The more people who steal the satellite signal, the less are paying for it.

Unless, as Comsat believes, they have discovered the way to outfox the bad guys.

Part of their plan includes employing a sophisticated system to protect the signals from non-paying "subscribers" tapping into them. This system is made up of a decoding system composed of specialized electronic chips containing hundreds of components. These chips are designed to defy duplication by all but the most high-tech oriented pirates with a great deal of cash to throw away: it would cost much more to duplicate than it would to subscribe to the service.

Another part of the security system will be automatic. It involves periodic "check-ups" through the satellites themselves which would send out special signals to each decoder. If a counterfeit decoder is being used to illegally receive the broadcast signal, it will not be able to answer the check-up pulse and will therefore not be able to decode the broadcast.

The security system will also enable Comsat to shut down the decoders, from the satellite in space, of subscribers who fall behind in their fees. The company, said to be planning to spend an initial \$500,000,000 on their DBS system, does not expect anyone to come up with an inexpensive means of broaching security.

TELETEXT

UP TO THEIR USUAL STANDARDS

The International Telegraph and Telephone Consultative Committee's (ITTCC) Plenary Assembly recently got together to choose a worldwide standard for videotext. The winner was Canada's Telidon, which now shares an equal status with such notable systems as the British Ceefax and Prestel, both currently in use in England and Europe.

Telidon has been around for three years and in that time it has been tested in Canada, Venezuela, and the United States. The ITTCC, incidentally, comes off making this rather grand pronouncement as part of the International Telecommunications Union, a United Nations agency charged with setting global standards for telecommunications.

Now if only the FCC could get its act together and get the U.S. a videotext system we can call our own.

DATA ACROSS THE WATER

While the cable companies plan things out on their own and the networks battle it out with the FCC, the British are quietly invading our shores with teletext.

RATINGS

SHARING THE WEALTH

A recent survey by the A.C. Nielsen Company confirms the continuing hegemony of cable systems and independent television stations into the audience shares previously dominated by the three networks. Both cable and the independents caused the nets to lose a substantial three and one half per cent of their audience between last November 10 and December 21, compared with the same period in 1979.

However, an anomaly has popped up in the midst of these statistics: While the network shares fell, prime time viewing rose slightly from the same six week period of the previous year. It has been suggested this irregularity represents a larger number of people watching the tube as the number of cable channels continues to increase and independents are able to present a more varied and popular line of programming while the nets receive a smaller part of the audience.

Several British teletext systems will be entering the U.S. business video market during the year. British Telecom, a company owned by the British government, and Logica, an English computer services firm, will introduce British Videotext Systems (BVS).

The BVS outfit will sell Prestel (*Video Action*, March 1981)—a system in use in England which links televisions in the home to a computerized database through telephone lines—and it will sell the Ceefax and Oracle viewdata services (*Video Action*, December 1980), which transmit information to television receivers via regular broadcast channels.

In July, Telecom and Logica will begin marketing an international commercial Prestel service to the U.S., Western Europe, Hong Kong, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The service will offer up-to-the-minute information on investments, shipping movements, insurance, computers, and commodities.

So if you happen to see the whites of their eyes as they wade ashore... don't fire! This time around, they are coming as friends.

WATCHING TIME ROLL BY

The Time Incorporated Video Group has announced plans to launch a nationwide videotext service some-

time this year. The service is seen by the organization's executive vice president Gerald Levin as "a new form of video publishing" aimed at the consumer market with information culled from Time Inc.'s own *Time* magazine and other print sources.

Wonder what *Playboy* would be like on the tube?

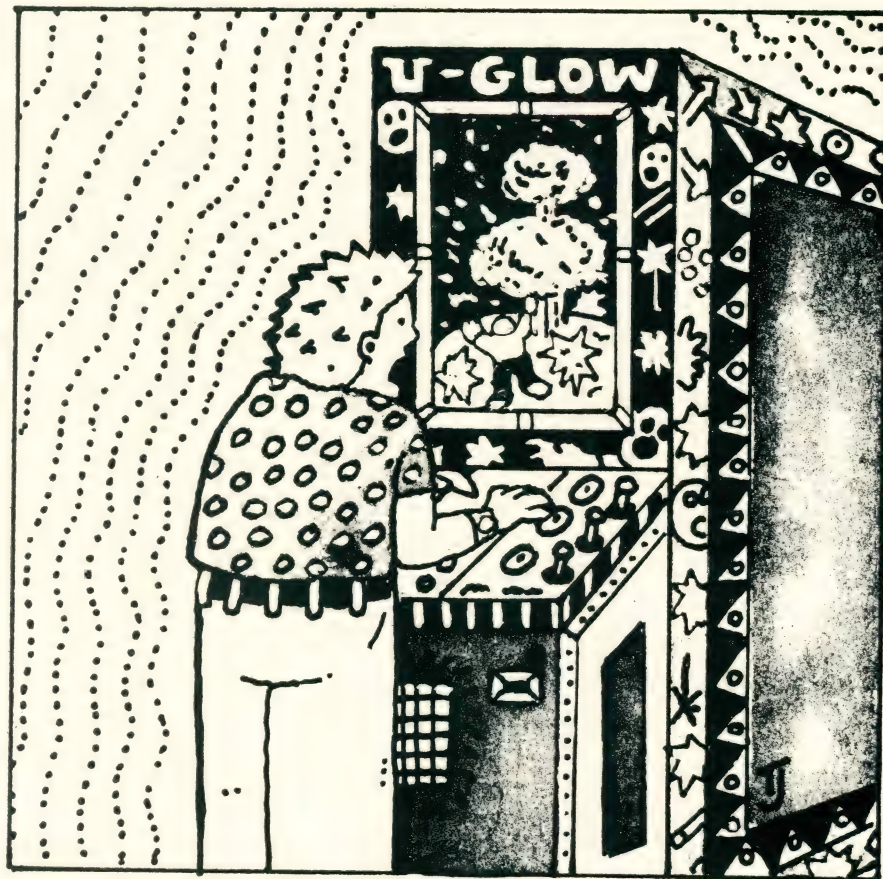
GAMES

SPACE INVADERS DON'T KILL —RADIATION KILLS

The next time you feel the urge coming on to drop a couple of bucks worth of quarters into one of those fancy video games like *Galaxian* or *Asteroids* you first might want to stop off somewhere and get yourself fitted with a lead vest. At least until October 1.

It seems there is something about these arcade video games that they never told us: the FCC allows a higher emission of radiation from these coin operated games than they do from the home video versions. The FCC postponed until October 1 the effective date of a ruling which requires commercial video games to meet the same radiation standards as are met by their home video cousins.

The delay was granted to give the Commission time to ponder a petition asking coin-op games be covered by the less stringent rules governing industrial computers used outside the home. The petitioners, Atari and Sega and Stern Electronics, contend



their units will not be used in homes but in commercial establishments and therefore do not fall under the same regulations as home video equipment. Atari maintains it would cost them \$300,000—that's over one mil-

lion quarters—to comply with these rules as they now stand.

So even if it cuts down on the body english a little, maybe the lead vest isn't such a bad idea. It sure beats growing a third eye.

PIRACY

KEEPING US HONEST, WHETHER WE WANNA BE OR NOT!

The Magnetic Video Corporation and several other home video software distributors are considering what might be the first truly workable video cassette rental system.

Previously, video dealers rented cassettes at their own risk—the renters could watch them as many times as they like and, copyguard notwithstanding, possibly run off duplicates. But recently large producers of home video tapes—particularly Walt Disney Telecommunications—have jumped on the rental bandwagon while others, like Magnetic Video, have been waiting in the wings until an effective method of policing the system could be developed.

What worried folks like those at Magnetic Video is if a manufacturer sells a group of cassettes intended

exclusively for sale to a retailer, they have no way of knowing for certain that those tapes will not be sold to yet another retailer who will then offer them for rental without giving the manufacturer its cut of the fee. Until now, there was no way to do this short of having "spotters" in every video retail store to report back to the manufacturer. Disney home video is trying such a system and it has resulted in several lawsuits against offending video stores, but it is probably a far too clumsy and time consuming way to handle the problem.

A plan being formulated by R-Cassette Industries Ltd. of San Rafael, California may eliminate those concerns. Under their system, the tapes you rent would be manufactured in such a way as to limit the number of times you could play the cassette on your home VCR. After the third play through, a special mechanism in the cassette "locks" the tape in place and makes it impossible to rewind. A special computer in the possession of

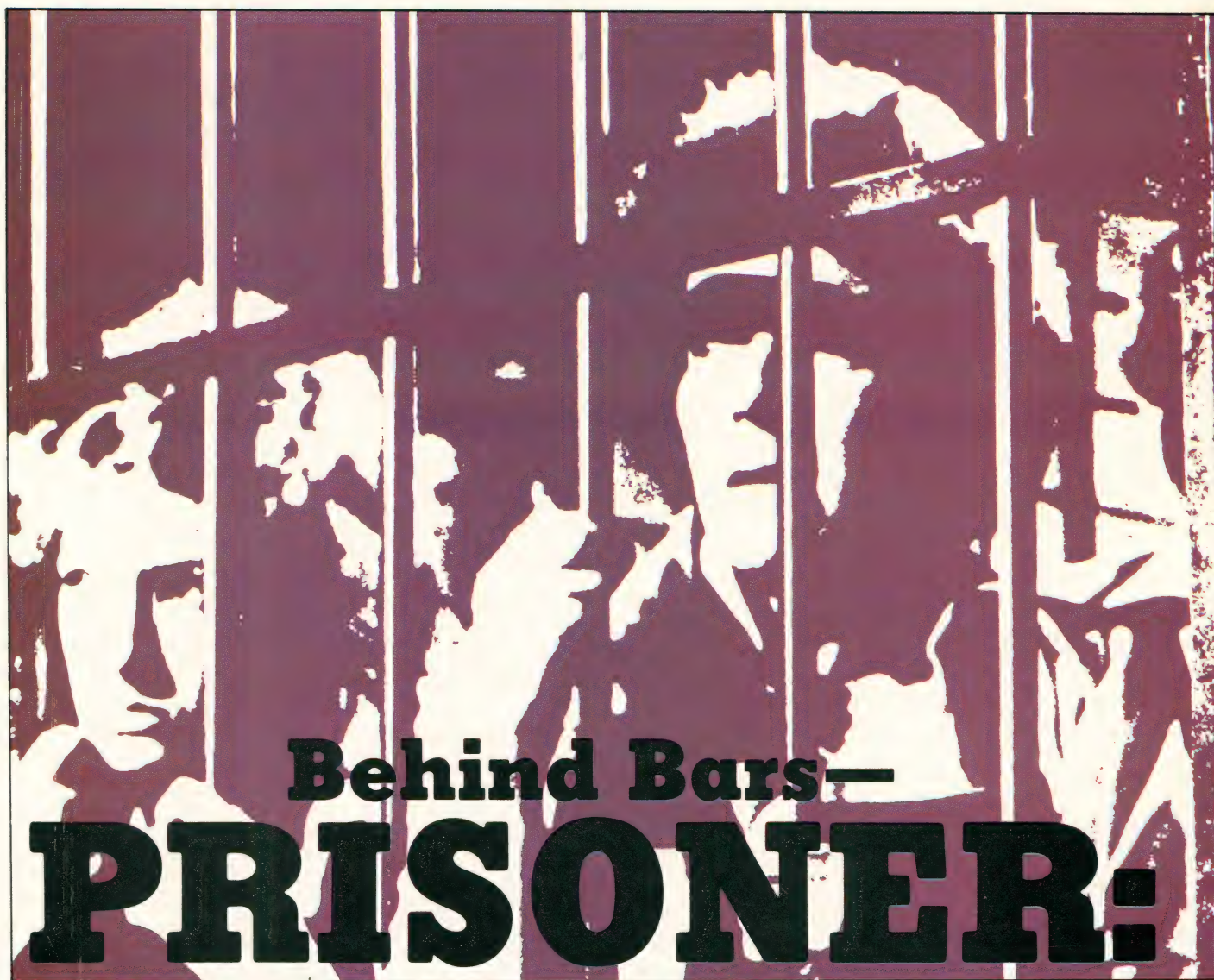
the retailer would have to be employed to rewind the tape—logging the number of rentals in the process.

Though this is the most ambitious fail-safe rental program to date, it is only one of several schemes being investigated. Another plan calls for each retailer—of which there is currently about 6000 nationwide—to pay a \$1000 yearly fee to each manufacturer to become a franchisee of video cassette rentals.

This is a hotly contested area indeed. With retail figures for video cassettes in the \$60 and up range, the \$5 to \$10 rental fees are a bargain for consumers. It also does not hurt the manufacturers who expect that as much as 75 percent of their product are now or will soon be rental material. That adds up to millions of dollars.

So with rentals now a *fait accompli*, and with the arrival of the much cheaper and more durable videodisc, the future of the prerecorded video cassette is in desperate need of

(Continued on page 39)



Behind Bars—

PRISONER:

CELL BLOCK H

or

**Who was that gay Australian axe
murderess I saw you with last night?**



By Larry Charet

LESBIANS, MURDERERS, terrorists, drug dealers, wife beaters, mercenaries—hardly the type of characters to command a highly-rated television series, right? Wrong.

The above-mentioned are only some of the bizarre inhabitants of Wentworth Detention Centre, all of them a *Prisoner: Cell Block H*, which happens to be the name of one of the most popular syndicated series in most of the markets in which it is shown.

Prisoner—as it is known to its estimated 32,000,000 fans in this country—first became popular here when the Australian-based Reg Grundy Productions convinced KTLA-TV in Los Angeles to air the series in a

weekly, hour-long format in August of 1979. Depicting graphic violence and language, the show became an instant hit, oustripping even its network competition in the ratings race.

The L.A. audiences took the *Prisoner: Cell Block H* people to their hearts, and before all the shouting began to die down even a bit, the program found itself airing in over 50 syndicated markets nationwide, including the highly lucrative New York and Chicago areas.

But popular as *Prisoner* may have become in L.A. and elsewhere since its U.S. debut, the show has its roots half a world away in Australia. *PCBH* premiered down under on February 27, 1979 on their Ten Network, courtesy of Grundy Productions. It was an instant success all across Australia, in some areas winning its timeslot by over 10 ratings points

against any and all comers, in the process capturing a continent's imagination: *Prisoner*, with its merry band of miscreants, is Australia's answer to *Dallas*.

PCBH is a tough, no-nonsense program, full of gloomy, stark prison cells and low-life killers, addicts, sadists, and child molesters—what happens on the show shocks and is meant to. According to one Grundy press release, "*Prisoner* is 'tailored' for adult-only viewing—after 8:30" in the evening. "The story follows the tragic circumstances which have caused prison sentences to be handed down to the young girls and the women in Wentworth... and also around the lives of the jail staff and people who become involved in the grimness of jail work."

Television viewers here and abroad have taken to the characters in a

way that can only be called incredible. Franky Doyle, the tough lesbian who appears early in the series, became a cult figure to the *Prisoner* audience, so much so that loyal fans held a "wake" in her honor outside the Australian television studio where it is taped when she was "killed off."

For any series to evoke this kind of reaction from viewers, there must be interesting characterizations. Despite the fact that most of the prisoners are extremely despicable, we somehow care about them and want to see what happens in their miserable lives.

Besides the late lamented Franky, the series has the mandatory character we all "love to hate." Vera Bennett (Fiona Spence), the ruthless warder, wants to become the governor of Wentworth and takes sadistic delight in pushing around the prisoners and staff alike and turning everyone against everybody else. Occasionally—most notably when she had a brief romantic fling with Deputy Governor Jim Fletcher—Vera's better side is glimpsed. At the rate she has been going, it would not be the least bit surprising if we one day had a "Who Shot Vera?" serial to keep us guessing.

Jim Fletcher (Gerard Maguire) is perhaps the most complex character in the series. He is the only man in a prison full of lonely women and has evolved during the course of the series. He has gone from being a hard-liner on disciplinary matters for the prisoners to a real pussycat. Jim could remain a pussycat no longer, though, once his past caught up with him in the form of Geoff Butler (Ray Meagher).

Butler, Jim's old Vietnam war buddy turned mercenary soldier, resents Jim's not joining up with him. Some people would simply cross Jim off their Christmas card list for such an affront, but Geoff, after a series of scuffles with the deputy governor, takes his revenge by blowing up the man's wife and children. These are nice folks we're dealing with here.

Not everyone at Wentworth is mean and nasty. Meg Jackson (Elspeth Ballantyne) has enough sweetness in her to make up for all the rest of the staff and prisoners even though she has ample reason for being the rottenest apple of them all. You see, her husband, the prison doctor, was

When Franky Doyle, the tough lesbian prisoner was killed off on the series, loyal fans held a "wake" in her honor outside the television studio.



Another confrontation between "Queen" Bea (Val Lehman) and Franky (Carol Burns).

killed during a riot and she is then forced to help the prisoner who murdered him. Later, Geoff Butler—remember him?—beats her up when she refuses his advances. Yet smiling through her tears, heartaches, and bruises, Meg is ever on hand to help her fellow inmates and lend an ear to all the staff's personal problems.

Governor Erica Davidson (Patsy King) also gets involved in everyone else's problems. She is a reformer, a firm believer in giving the prisoners a second chance and constantly striving for their rehabilitation. Prison gray is in her blood; once she contemplated taking a long leave of absence from Wentworth but had to hurry back to her post. Of course, the possibility of Vera the warder taking over while she was gone somewhat influenced that decision.

Dr. Greg Miller (Barry Quin) considered leaving Wentworth many times himself, but it took prisoner Karen Travers to get him finally to do it. Greg and Karen (Pieta Toppano) were romantically involved before she was sent to Wentworth and, after her parole they decided to tie the knot after Greg set up a private practice (Kerry and Pieta, incidently, followed a similar course in real life as man and wife).

Karen Jackson aside, some of the other inmates have their good quali-

ties. Lynn Warner (Kerry Anderson) was, at first, wrongly convicted but got into real mischief when she was cleared and eventually wound up right back in a cell. Mum Brooks (Mary Ward) was in and out of Wentworth for years until her family accepted her back into the fold. Pat O'Connell (Monica Maughan) aided her criminal husband and son and wound up with a long sentence for her troubles.

Of course, the real stars of *PCBH* are the most colorful prisoners. Queen "Bea" Smith (Val Lehman) rules the prison roost. A real sweetheart, Bea is in Wentworth for murdering her husband as an act of revenge for the death of her daughter by a drug overdose. Because of this, Bea hates pushers and shows her wrath whenever one is unlucky enough to be sentenced to her prison. Bea has had her rule challenged several times but she has been able to outlast them all. Life sentences do have their compensations.

Doreen Anderson (Colette Mann) has fought it out with Bea many times, but at heart, she is nothing more than a frightened little girl and her teddy bear usually gives her more security than a battle with the Queen. Doreen even manages to get paroled later in the series but eventually finds her way back to



The prisoners of Wentworth Detention Center are locked behind bars during the riot, started by Franky (Carol Burns) in the dining room.



Dr. Greg Miller (Barry Quin) inspects cigarette burns on the back of prison newcomer Karen Travers (Peita Toppano).

Wentworth to share a cell with her best friend, Lizzie Birdsworth (Sheila Florance).

Lizzie is Wentworth's oldest inmate and it is the prison she considers home, even after her parole. It seems she was cleared of a murder rap after serving 20 years but found it impossible to adjust to the outside comforts of Melbourne. She was finally able to make her way back to the slammer by flushing a judge's papers down the courthouse toilet. Fortunately, the scripts for *Prisoner* do not suffer the same fate as those papers, thanks to scriptwriters/producers Ian Bradley and Philip East. They, along with head writers Reg Watson, Denise Morgan, and Michael Brindley, keep things moving at a much livelier pace than their U.S. soap opera counterparts. It is also a much grittier world that they portray. *Prisoner's* selling point is its setting; a drama set behind bars in a woman's prison is a concept that demands a realism that most soap operas would gloss over with a cup of coffee and some angelfood cake.

A random sampling of episode descriptions whets the appetite for the promised, and expected, down-and-dirty lifestyle of the prisoners:

"Two newly convicted girls enter Wentworth to suffer the indignities

of new prisoners and discover the world of women behind bars."

"In Bea's absence Franky makes her move to control the prison . . . Vera the tough prison guard schemes to cut Franky down to size."

"When Franky starts a riot Meg finds herself trapped as she cares for the pregnant Rose."

"Franky makes a pass at Karen and Bea steps in as peacemaker."

"Away from the prison, the rape of Sarah Roberts on a vacant lot leads to a chain of tragic consequences."

"Franky discovers that Doreen has been beaten up by the man she has slept with. She steals his gun, uses it on him and they go on the run again—with the gun."

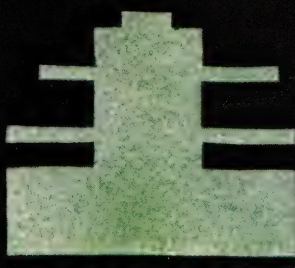
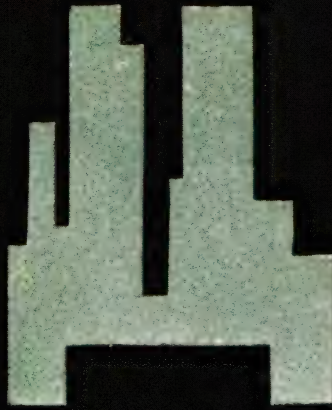




"In order to demonstrate her power, Monica forces Lizzie and Doreen into punishing Nolene by holding her under a scalding shower."

This is strong stuff. It could not have been produced for the U.S. networks—indeed, it is doubtful it would have made it in the syndication market if local stations were not forced to adopt more competitive

practices due to pressure from the cable field. *Prisoner* is an established hit wherever it is shown; it ain't *Masterpiece Theater*, and that says something about what we are ready to view on American television.

As mentioned earlier, *PCBH* was shown in weekly, one-hour installments when it first aired in Los Angeles. Now, there and in most other markets, it is run nightly in half hour segments. In Canada, however, it is aired under the title *Caged Women* one hour weekly. In its country of origin, the fans of *Prisoner* view it thrice weekly and new episodes are still being taped at this time.

In its initial season, *PCBH* won two Logie Awards, the Australian version of the Emmies. Carol Burns, who portrayed Franky Doyle won for best lead actress and the show itself won in the best new drama category. In fact, the success of *Prisoner* has prompted Grundy Productions—at the urging of one of the U.S. networks—to create a spin-off series. Now in production, *Punishment* follows the lives and crimes of the male prisoners housed elsewhere in Wentworth Detention Centre. Somehow, I doubt that the male inmates could ever be as interesting as the ladies. ■



GAMES ATAR NEVER TAUGHT ME

by Mark Benjamin

WHEN IT COMES TO OWNING a television computer game, people react in different ways.

Some owners use their games only when visitors call. Though thrilled with the game and amazed at its capabilities, they see the unit as being for social occasions—something to be shared with friends for their mutual enjoyment.

Other, highly competitive owners practice with their machines until they become proficient. They then use their games solely to test their skill and coordination against other players.

There is a third group of owners. While they enjoy showing the various cartridges to their friends and relish competing against others, this group considers these to be secondary concerns. This is because these people have a constant antagonist whom they can never overcome. These owners, known to some as *video addicts*, have the world's most tenacious foes: themselves.

The video addict spends hours at a time at his machine, even though he may have owned his game for years. His constant goal is to better his own past performance. While occasionally he may tire, within a few days the video addict is back at his controls trying to break his own record scores.

Despite the wide variety of games, there comes a time when the addict looks for games more difficult than those described in the cartridges's instruction pamphlets. This is almost inevitable due to the large number of hours the true addict invests in his game.

It is my goal to share some of the "tricks" that this particular video addict (yes, I am a member of that dreaded third group) has discovered which make my Atari game a bit more challenging. Some of these tricks may also be used by owners of games made by companies other than Atari.

The cartridge that I shall use as my starting point is, in my opinion,

one of Atari's finest: *Air-Sea Battle*. And three of its best games are numbers four, five, and six.

All three of these games have two stationary "guns" situated at the bottom of the screen. When activated by a player's joystick controller these guns shoot "missiles" at planes which fly across the top part of the picture. Every time a plane is hit by a missile, points are scored. In addition to the firing button, the player can control his gun by tilting it to one of three firing angles.

Game four is the basic two player game described above. Game five is the same as four except the two players can also control the flight of their missiles after they leave the guns. Game six is a one player affair with the left gun fired automatically by the computer at one fixed angle while the right gun is fired by the human player. The player cannot control the flight of his missiles as in game five, though he can still adjust the tilt of his gun.

The video addict naturally will gravitate to game six when he is exploring *Air-Sea Battle*. True to form, he will constantly replay this one player game until he bests his previous top score—then he will play it again until he tops his new record.

But he'll probably reach a point when he has it mastered. After all, there are 136 seconds allowed for this variation and only a maximum of 99 points can be scored. What does our video addict do when he con-

sistently reaches the 99 point total before his time limit has expired? Is the challenge over?

Not necessarily. There are a number of options open to him to make these games more difficult.

First is to turn back to game four. He can start by firing with one controller until he reaches a score of, say, 90. He can then put the first controller down, pick up the second controller, and see how high his *total* score can go before the time limit expires. Doing this he has expanded the range of the game by over 90 per cent, from 99 to 197 points.

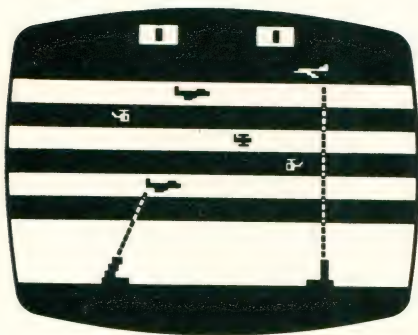
Note that the figure of 90 is totally arbitrary. The only thing to avoid is reaching 99 with the first controller since this automatically ends the game.

Let's say our player really likes the challenge of playing against the computer. He wants, however, to see how he will do when he can the flight of his missile after it has been fired. He cannot do this with game six because this variation allows only non-controlled missiles. Is there anything he can do?

I would recommend he stop by his local hardware store and pick up a small C-clamp. He can attach this clamp to either of his controllers and tighten it until the red firing button is depressed. Then he can pick up the other controller and turn on game five.

His computer system is now acting

How to Get More
Out of Your Video
Game than the
Manufacturer Put In



Above: *Air Sea Battle's* playing field. Right: the same playing field, but masked to make the game more challenging.

like game six, except the human player has the option of controlling his missiles after firing while the clamp on the other controller has created a continuously firing computer opponent.

With the clamp attached to the controller, the computer-operated gun on game five fires at only one angle and with no control after a missile is launched. Can anything be done to enable the computer's gun to tilt and its missiles to travel in something other than a straight line?

There is one way, but to accomplish it requires a minor bit of engineering. First, our player should obtain a rectangle of wood, plastic, or hard cardboard between five and eight inches long and between two and three inches wide. The rectangle should be made of a material hard enough to take a minor amount of pressure without bending or cracking, but thin enough so two holes can be easily drilled into it.

The next step is to put the two joystick controllers next to one another on a flat surface. The red buttons on both controllers should be pointing in the same direction.

Next, take the rectangle and place it over the shafts of the controllers noting where the top of each stick touches the rectangle. Two holes should be drilled or cut into the rectangle just large enough so that the two shafts of the controllers will fit snugly within them.

Now the player should turn to game five. The controllers should be side-by-side with the top of each shaft sticking up through each of the two holes in the rectangle. The player then attaches the clamp to one of the firing buttons. Then he should hit the reset button to start the game, grab the controller without the clamp, and try to get as many points as he can.

What has been set up is a game in which the computer will automatically fire, because of the clamp holding down one button. But notice that as the player moves his control stick to adjust the tilt of his gun, the gun that the computer is firing also tilts because the rectangle moves its control stick. Similarly, as the player controls his missiles after he fires his gun, the computer's missiles are also manipulated in their flight.

The C-clamp and rectangle can also be used with other cartridges besides *Air-Sea Battle*. Take *Combat*, for instance. The clamp and rectangle

If the player is good enough, he will have the basic timing of AIR-SEA BATTLE's planes down pat—if not, he probably should go back to an easier game.

can be used on the bi-plane and jet fighter aerial dogfight games. This produces games in which there is a computer opponent who not only fires back, but also maneuvers in flight as the human player controls his bi-plane or jet. Many applications with still other games on other cartridges are also possible.

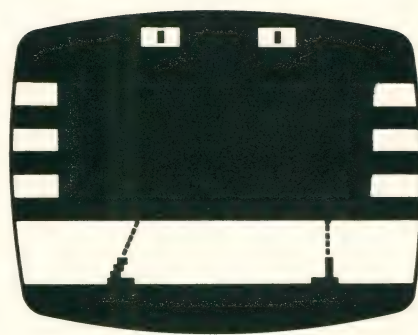
Note the example above had both firing buttons facing the same direction. What would happen if the buttons were facing in *opposite* directions when the rectangle is used with game five of *Air-Sea Battle*?

The result would be that when the player's gun is tilted to the right, the computer is tilting its gun to the left. Similarly, when the player is guiding his missile to the left after it's fired from his gun, the computer's missile is guided to the right. Having the controllers point in varying directions produces some interesting effects and some very challenging games.

I have one other gimmick that spices up my Atari game a bit. It involves putting coverings or, as I call them, "masks" over parts of playing fields.

The material for these masks can be any inexpensive, easily shapable material which can block off portions of the screen from the viewer. Heavy construction paper, which can easily be attached with pieces of tape, is ideal.

How can these masks be used on Atari games? Let's go back to our old example, *Air-Sea Battle*, game



five. Presuming the player is fairly proficient, he will be familiar with the horizontal tracks over which the planes travel on the television screen. The player should cut out a mask large enough to cover all of these tracks. However, he should make sure that each of the guns and the scores at the top are not covered. Also, he should cut the mask so that the entire left one-fifth of the screen is completely visible as well as the right one-fifth.

What he will have when he turns on the game is a brief glimpse of the planes as they start across the screen and then another brief glimpse as they leave the screen on the other side. If the player is good enough, he will have the basic timing of the planes' flights down pat and will be able to rack up a respectable score even though the planes are invisible most of the time. If he's not good enough, he probably should go back to an easier game.

The uses of masks are practically limitless. They can even be used on cartridges which do not rely on fast-paced action. *Casino*, for example, has stud poker as one of its options. This game has, at most, only one of the dealer's cards hidden until the final bet is placed. With properly placed masks, two or more cards can be hidden. This makes betting a riskier and more exciting proposition.

Again, I would like to point out that the gimmick discussed above can be used on video game systems other than Atari's. Magnavox, for example, has the same essential joystick configuration and some of its games can also benefit from the addition of masks.

Trying some of the above tricks should make your games more challenging. They have certainly enhanced my game-playing enjoyment. One feature of these game systems which I really appreciate is the ability to add some creativity of my own to develop personalized and exciting games. ■

Newsline

(Continued from page 31)

tracking. The next few months should begin to give us an answer.

MOVIE POLICE THEY MIGHT BE BUT KEYSTONE KOPS THEY AIN'T

Thinking of picking up a bootleg copy of a just released motion picture so you can be the first kid on your block to see it at home? Think again. The movie police might nab you.

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has announced a 25 percent increase in its 1981 worldwide budget to combat the staggering number of motion picture and video tape pirates loose in this world. The MPAA is the trade association for many of the largest producers and distributors of movies and television programming: Avco Embassy Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Walt Disney Productions, Filmways Pictures, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artists, Universal, and Warners.

MPAA president Jack Valenti noted the organization now has what he calls "security" offices in Hollywood

and New York staffed by former FBI agents; in Paris, staffed by a former inspector general of the French Police; in London, headed by an ex-detective chief superintendent of Scotland Yard; and one in Hong Kong presided over by a former chief inspector of the Royal Hong Kong Police. In addition to all this manpower, the Association is planning to open a security office in South Africa as well.

Valenti added the MPAA's sister organization, the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) has similar offices in London, Paris, Rome, Rio de Janeiro, Manila, and New Delhi.

Piracy is almost as big as the material they pirate. A single pirate can gross hundreds of thousands of dollars and up with little difficulty. Multiply that by several thousand pirates both large and small and you begin to see what the MPAA is worried about.

Despite the odds, the MPAA head says progress is being made. Criminal prosecutions of film and video tape pirates have occurred in Australia, Canada, Egypt, Fiji, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Netherlands, The Phillipines, Singapore, South



Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and right here at home. Many of them are thanks to the MPAA security offices.

In the U.S. alone, Valenti says, there have been 138 criminal convictions for piracy since 1975, with 58 of them occurring last year alone.

And if Mr. Valenti and company get their way, many more pirates will find themselves walking the plank before too long.

YO-HO-HO AND A BOTTLE OF HEAD CLEANER

Vice president and deputy general attorney for the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) James Bouras came out quite strongly on the subject of video and film piracy recently. This is no great surprise, considering the amount of time, effort, and money the MPAA is spending to combat piracy the world over (see related story above).

Bouras believes the activities of the video pirates will change in the near future from the "illicit duplication of legitimate prerecorded material" to the more costly—for video cassette distributors—"film-to-tape transfers of motion pictures which have not yet been released to the home video market."

Speaking before the Second International Video Rights Conference in London, the MPAA veeep said, "Once a given film is in the home video market legitimately, a pirate can compete only by undercutting" the going

retail price of the prerecorded cassette. Bouras went on to say manufacturers and distributors stand to lose considerably more money to the growing practice of illegal showings of copyrighted video programming by private clubs, hotels, corporations, and others.

Bouras also worries the sales of prerecorded material might be adversely affected by off-the-air tapings of pay television presentations. The Copyright Law as it now stands is inadequate, he feels, to effectively combat piracy. "Technology is running so far ahead of the law that one is sometimes tempted to question the continued vitality of the very concept of copyright," Bouras says.

The only laws he feels can be used with any real success against pirates are existing tax regs, specifically those dealing with tax evasion. Most pirates do not bother reporting the substantial incomes they make from their illicit activities. Bouras also said he foresees more litigation in the future coming from the motion picture industry against video retailers who carry illegally duped tapes or who sell

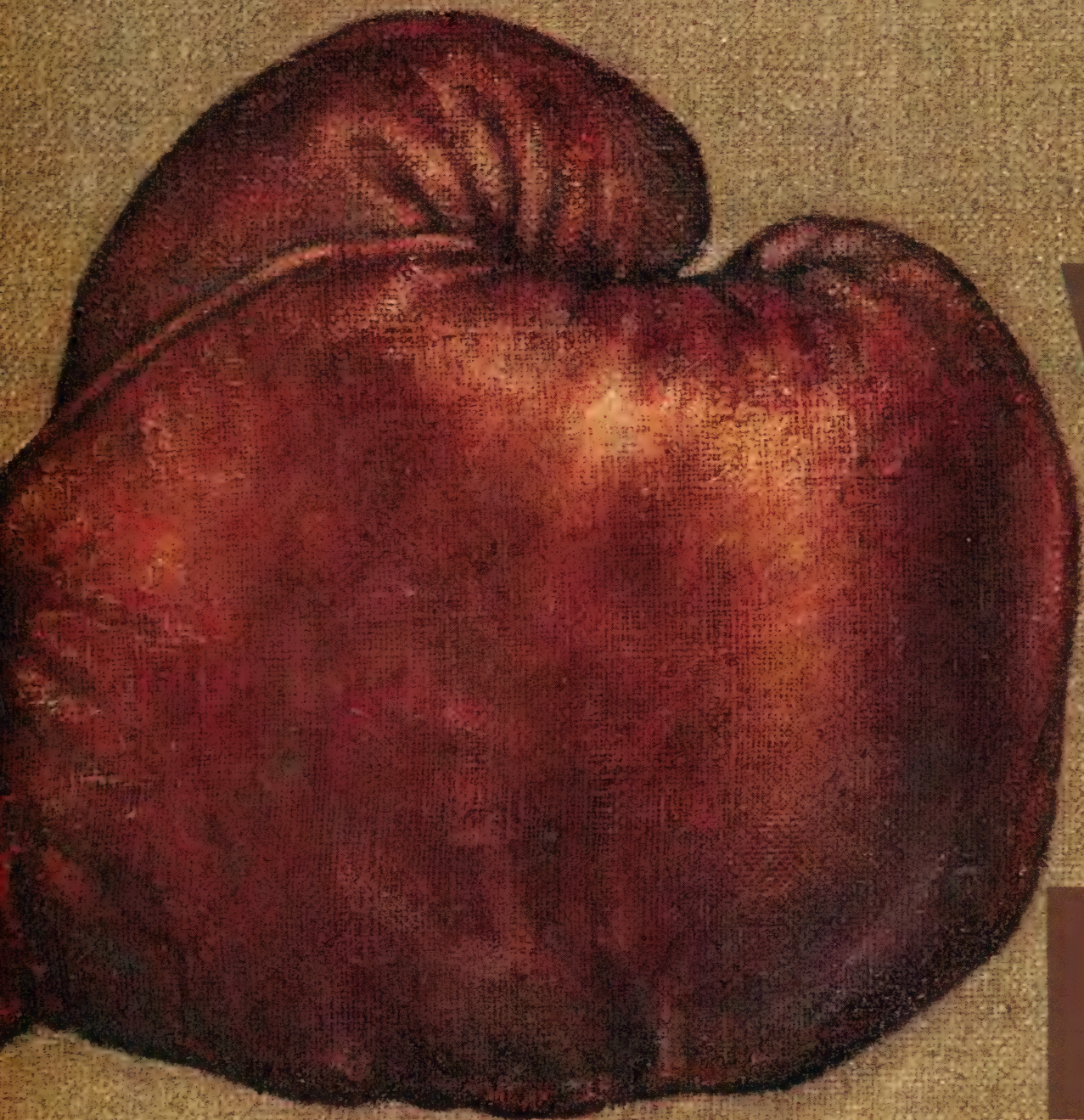
rentals, or, for that matter, rent tapes intended for sale.

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!

Piracy is to home video what bootlegging was to prohibition. Unlike those pirates of bygone days, however, video pirates are finding it harder and harder to get away with it.

A Cincinnati Federal Appeals Court has reversed a lower court ruling in which Chartwell Communications—operators of that city's ON-TV subscription television station over Detroit's WXON-TV—was enjoined from taking legal action against two men selling unauthorized signal decoders for \$150. The Appeals Court ruled subscription broadcasts, while intended for public consumption, is not the same as commercial broadcasting since it is intended for subscribers.

The Cincinnati court also upheld Chartwell's contention that subscription television is protected from unauthorized interception of its signal by the Communications Act.

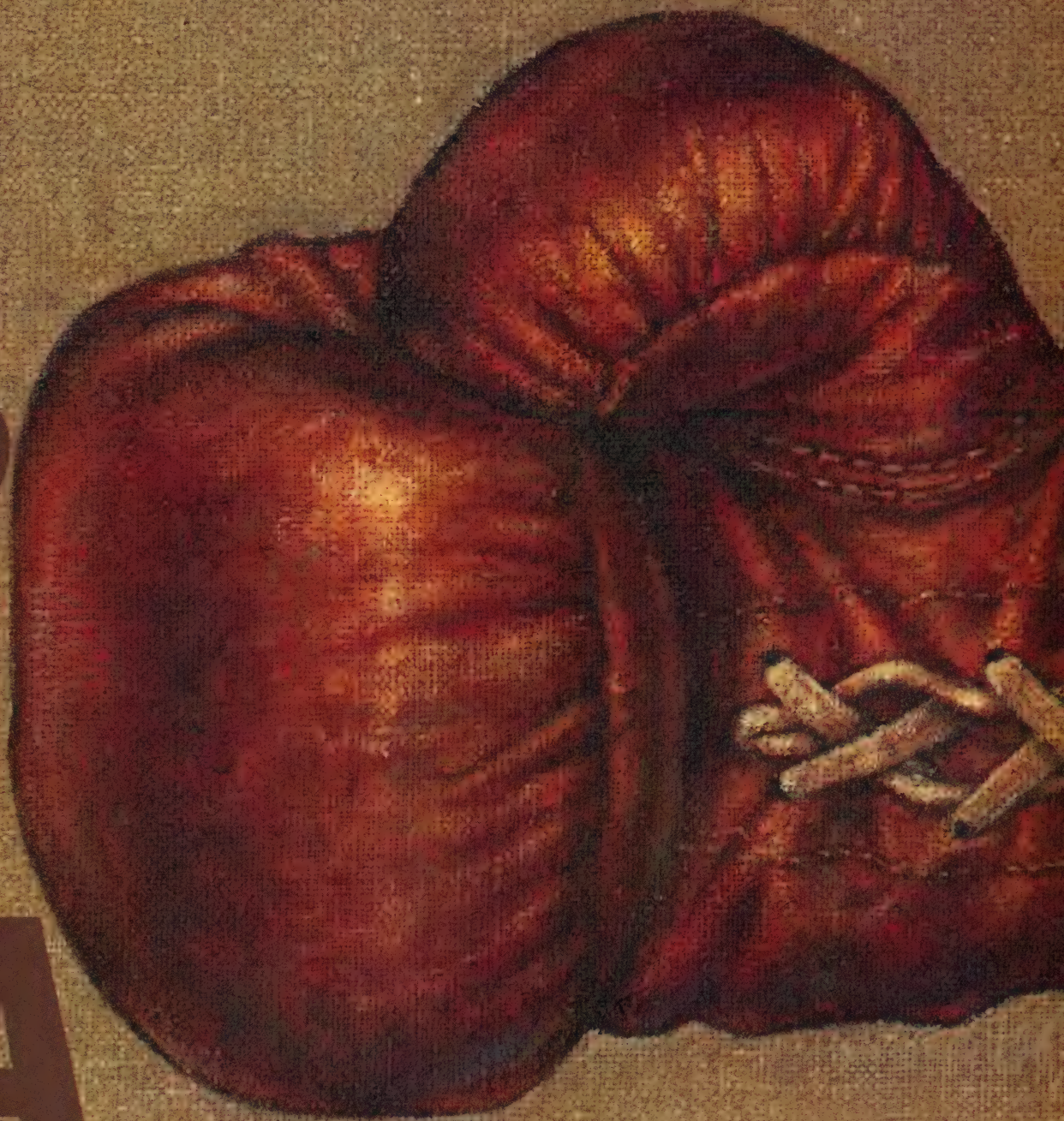


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VHS VS BETA

Word on at Debate



OPINION by Alex Josephs

WANT TO BRIGHTEN UP a party? Get a little meaningful debate going? Just tell someone you hate cats and love dogs. Or vice versa.

Or, better still, start talking about how the Beta video cassette format has it all over the VHS. Or vice versa.

There is something about either question that drains the rationality out of people. In the latter case—the one that is relevant to *Video Action* readers—it is not too hard to understand the cause of such fervored

response: a VCR owner has about one thousand bucks wrapped up in his or her machine, and perhaps another thousand in video cassettes. Many, many VCR owners have a greater investment.

The time has come to answer the question “Which is better—Beta or VHS?”

First, some background. I have had extensive experience with both formats—I have had a great deal of “hands-on” time with Beta and VHS recorders and, whereas I spend about 95% of my time working in one format, I do so after having



made an informed decision.

Next, some ground rules. I am not reviewing specific models or manufacturers—I am only addressing the issue of *format*. Within each format exist turkey manufacturers, and within the ranks of nearly every manufacturer exist turkey models. Just because Ford Motors built the Edsel, one should not assume every car Ford builds is as bad as the Edsel.

Finally, an important note. This is *not* a technical article, in keeping with *Video Action's* policy of writing for consumers (i.e. people) instead of engineers. I have studied the technical specifications, and I make a good part of my living understanding such data. I am writing with the specs in mind—just because you can understand what I am saying does not mean this stuff has been ignored.

For the sake of simplicity, I have divided my analysis into five categories: features, picture quality, construction, compatibility, and conformance. The last two points are not redundant.

FEATURES

This one is simple. Everybody has got everything, somewhere in his product line. The fast forward search, the reverse search, audio dubbing, wired remote control . . . whichever format introduces it first, the other will jump in before too long. Such is the nature of life in the marketplace.

If you define recording time as a feature, then there are some differences: present-day VHS machines can record up to six hours on standard-thickness tape, present-day Beta machines can only record three. The Beta format does have a thinner tape (see *construction*) which stretches the recording time to five hours.

We will give both formats six points for features, and we will give VHS four points for time, Beta three.

PICTURE QUALITY

There are lots of ways one can define picture quality. In addition to the following points, there is the famous "eye test." When you are looking at VCRs, see if you can have both formats played through the same television set, and make sure that set is the same size (12 inch, 19 inch, or whatever) as the tube you have at home.

To flirt with the technical stuff, those "otherways" of looking at picture quality are: tape speed, the writing speed, and the width of the video head. In all three cases, bigger—or *faster*—is better.

If you ever fooled around with a reel-to-reel audio tape recorder, you know the faster the tape speed, the better the sound. The same is true with video tape: the faster the speed, the better the picture.

(Of course, the faster the speed on

a VCR, the better the sound. However, this factor is almost completely irrelevant: the tape speeds at their fastest are too slow for adequate sound reproduction, and, anyway, those tiny, tinny speakers found in almost every television set ain't worth a damn.)

There are three different speeds in each format: the Beta I speed is twice as fast as the Beta II and three times as fast as Beta III. The VHS SP speed is twice as fast as the VHS LP and three times as fast as the VHS SLP (or EP) speed.

Now, the Beta I picture is superior to the VHS SP. Unfortunately, you can no longer buy a Beta that records in Beta I, so one must compare the fastest VHS speed with the fastest *available* Beta speed—Beta II. VHS SP is superior to Beta II. VHS LP is superior to Beta III, which is not very good. VHS SLP is the worst of the lot, so the VHS machines have the ability to offer the fastest and slowest available recording speeds in its commercial models.

In terms of pre-recorded tapes, most commercially available Beta tapes were recorded at Beta II, and most commercially available VHS pre-recorded tapes were cut at the SP speed.

The VHS format comes out ahead in the width of video head area. The bigger the record/playback gap in the head, the better the picture. As speeds have increased, the gaps have narrowed: Beta from 60 microns down to 19.5, VHS from 58 microns down to 38. Wait a second, though, before you run out and buy your VHS machine: whereas *certain* VHS models have 60 and even 90 micron heads (only in the SP mode), some of these same machines also have a set of 19.5 heads for the SLP mode.

"Writing speed" is a complicated formula that primarily relates to the signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio: the faster the writing speed, the greater the S/N, and the sharper the picture. In this category, Beta has got VHS beat all over: the average Beta writing speed is approximately 6.99 meters per second, compared to the VHS average of about 5.82 meters per second. That 1.17 meters per second difference is significant.

If not for the Beta planned obsolescence nonsense, they would steal this category. Unfortunately, with the elimination of the Beta I recording speed, VHS has got to be given eight points to Beta's six.

CONSTRUCTION

There are a lot of different ways of

comparing the construction of the different format machines and tapes. The most celebrated is in the loading system.

In loading the tape into the machine, the cassette is opened and the tape is wrenched into place. The Beta machines use a B-wrap—the tape travels a path similar to that of the Greek letter *beta*. The manner in which this is done is less stressful than the VHS M-wrap, where the tape is loaded into a complicated M-shaped position.

There is one advantage to the M-wrap: during the fast-forward and reverse modes, the tape does not pass across the tape heads, unless one is scanning for position. This does allow for a bit less wear-and-tear . . . nonetheless, it is the stress inherent in the M-wrap system that is the main reason why there is no ultra-thin VHS tape (the mythical nine-hour tape)—yet.

Still, the M-wrap is not all that bad. Whereas Sony took out a big “first-we-made-theirs” advertising campaign to extol the virtues of the B-wrap, one should keep two important factors in mind: 1) Sony did not make “theirs” first—a number of companies were in on *that* action, and 2) that awful M-wrap that Sony claims to have invented and then rejected is the *very same* M-wrap used in Sony’s professional $\frac{3}{4}$ ” VCRs—the ones the network news crews carry around on location.

There are a few, minor points to be made in this area: by and large, the VHS machines are a bit lighter and use a bit less electricity than the Betas. The tracking control on the Beta machines is a bit more accessible. Then again, that Beta-stacker that allows for the use of a number of tapes only works on certain models, and, according to Beta fans, only works about three-quarters of the time.

The Beta tapes are smaller and easier to store than the VHS tapes, and they are better made: the Beta tapes wind at a more even tension, allowing for a more consistent image and fewer drop-outs.

Then again, the Beta L-750 and L-830 use thinner tape, which is easier to jam or stretch. Sooner or later, VHS manufacturers will have a thinner-but-longer tape line, too, and they will loose this advantage.

We’ll give Beta seven points and VHS six in this category. Both have room for improvement.

COMPATABILITY

At one time, there was a lot of

hysteria about how VHS LP tapes recorded on one machine could not play back on another. This was proven to be a lot of nonsense, although the VHS owner might have to use his tracking control a bit more often when playing somebody else’s LP tapes than his Beta II counterpart.

As noted, one can no longer go out and buy a new Beta machine that records in the fast B-I mode. And if the VHS owner is not careful, he might find himself buying a two/six hour machine that does not record in the four hour speed. Whereas there are very, very few such models, one must beware. Both format manufacturers should be shot for such planned obsolescence.

I would like to take ten points away from both formats for that, but the fact of the matter is, there are no other compatability problems—outside of the aforementioned incompatibility of the Beta stacker. We’ll give ‘em each five points.

CONFORMANCE

If you have been keeping track, you will note VHS has a two-point advantage over Beta—a *slight* advantage at best.

Here’s the kicker.

If you are about to go out and buy your first VCR, you should find out what types of machines your friends

have. Whereas between 60% and 70% of VCR owners own VHS machines (which should give the VHS another two or three points over Beta) it very well may be all—or most—of your friends and relatives own Beta machines.

Pre-recorded tapes are expensive. Home movies-on-tape are very expensive if they are one-of-a-kind items. You are likely to want to trade tapes with these people, but in order to do so, you will need to get into the format that conforms with that of your friends.

If you are the first one on your block, so to speak, then you might be better off buying a VHS machine for the following reasons:

1) Our survey did note a slight advantage for VHS.

2) Statistically speaking, you are more likely to *meet* people who have VHS machines.

3) Many smaller pre-recorded video tape outlets stock more VHS tapes—some do not stock Beta at all.

Of course, if the stores near you are having a fantastic Beta sale, one where you might save, say, \$100.00 over a VHS with the same features, then the weight of evidence is on the side of Beta.

In the great format debate, I would have to say it is VHS over Beta by a split decision.

As always, *caveat emptor*. ■





GUESS WHAT'S COMING TO DINNER

Now some restaurants are catering to the tastes of video gourmets as well

By Marilyn Ferdinand

YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN technology is going to zing you another one in the old breadbasket.

I was slogging down the street one graylit afternoon, feeling the misty rain mat my hair to my head. A small bead of water clinging stubbornly to the end of my nose had me cross-eyed and crazy. Clearly a less humid atmosphere was called for.

My eyes were drawn to a large, red sign looming far above the darkened asphalt: Presto Restaurant, Baking Done on Premises, 24 Hours, *Cocktails*. My inner voice wheezed with relief. All I wanted was an Irish coffee, a buttery omelet, and a dark

corner where I could read my newspaper in peace. I quickly ducked in.

A short, congenial Greek led the way to my booth. The room decor had an international flavor—the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem, the gondolas of Venice—rendered, no doubt, by some fugitive from a CETA project. The management obviously had a lot of confidence in their cook since they had made no attempt to distract attention from their food. However, if I had seen what else they had spruced the joint up with I might have lost my appetite.

Halfway into my horoscope I became aware of voices behind me arguing over some apparently confidential matter. I slowly leaned to the left to catch every other word.

The man, Luke, was getting a lot of

grief from the woman, Laura, over a little black book. Somebody—Laura? An irate husband?—was looking to kill him over it. But Luke adamantly refused to part with it. He kept saying that his life wouldn't be worth a plug nickel without it. To die over a few phone numbers, some memories—men like that are truly rare. Feeling quite moved I tilted to a more acute angle, trying to catch the drift of their pregnant pause. The next thing I heard was a crescendo of music, silence, and then the words "Stayfree Mini-Pads." Kinky.

I began to suspect that things were not as I imagined them to be. I decided to make some discreet observations for the sake of public decency.

My interest in Luke, Laura, and the black book vanished as I poked my head nonchalantly around the booth partition to gaze in wonder at a small, metal protuberance above the sugar shaker. You guessed it—for the first time in my restauranting experiences I was face-to-face with a television set.

Well, that's not precisely true. I have seen one or two perched above the cash register at snack counters. And, of course, the corner pub is equipped with a wide-screen set for showing whatever sport the season dictates. But a three-inch boob tube in a regular eatery, exchanging 15 minutes of programming for every quarter: That was a new one!

Why the sight of that teeny television filled me with such amazement I cannot say. Still... I started to imagine an oven door folding down; a floral mitt pulling out a large, foil-covered tray; two eager hands peeling back the aluminum and there, waiting invitingly for the first fork stab: Archie Bunker, Phyllis George, and (be still my heart) Tom Synder. I was getting delirious.

The table was empty except for the remains of a fruit plate and a few empty half-and-halves crowded around a coffee cup. The commercials blared away, mindless of the fact that no one was listening. I slid into the booth for a closer look.

I soon found out that I had been eavesdropping on the soap opera, *General Hospital*, and that the black book contained a coded list of crime syndicate figures. How disappointing. With no lurid affair to fantasize about I idly began mulling over the implications of my discovery.

**The next thing
I heard was a
crescendo of
music and
then the words
"Stayfree
Mini-Pads"—
for the first
time in my
restauranting
experiences, I
was
face-to-face
with a
television set.**

Naturally, working soap opera addicts came to mind. What a godsend this little device must be to them. With lunch hour havens like the Presto they would no longer have to wonder about the outcome of a half dozen plot twists.

Then there were the couples who never go anywhere except between the television and the refrigerator. For them this little beauty combines the best of dining out and eating in.

That last thought sounded a lot like an advertisement, so I began to wonder about the drawbacks to slot television. First off, there were bound to be people using these things who sound like laugh tracks unto themselves; or who turn the volume up full; or who carry on running dialogs with the set. That would put me right off my stuffed tomato surprise.

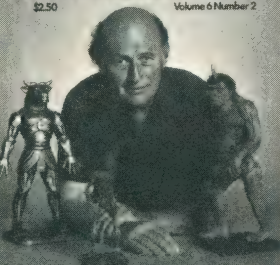
And what about those younger or more sensitive viewers everyone hears about but never sees? Maybe they all hang out in greasy spoons just waiting for the chance to pull the plug on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

There were certain class distinctions that had to be considered. Would the posh restaurants lock their dials onto the PBS stations? Would they be so sneaky as to put alarms on the channel selectors in the hope of catching some pseudo-snob tuning into *That's Incredible*? One false move in front of the wrong people, and the effect of those donations to the symphony orchestra—up in smoke.

These televisions could also provide another lucrative inroad for organized crime. More shakedowns, crackdowns, and payoffs. Maitre d's being fitted for cement cummerbunds. G-men with gravy boats. Horrors!

The drift of my thoughts convinced me I had been watching too much television myself. I scrambled back to my table, gathered up my things, and headed for the exit. I threw my money at the cashier without so much as stopping for a mint-flavored toothpick. Then flinging the door open with all my might, I made my escape.

As the soggy air rushed into my face, my sensibility returned. I paused for a moment in front of the Presto's front window, searching for a flicker from that fateful booth. I slowly turned to make my way up the sidewalk. That annoying drop of water had found its way to my nose again.

Ray Harryhausen on
Sinbad and The SeaTHE
EMPIRE
STRIKES
GOLD

George Lucas
does for dry goods
what Madison
Avenue did for
breakfast cereals.

By Bill George

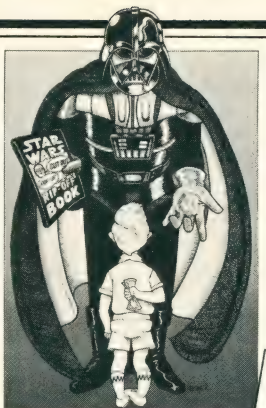
The time is 1980. The place Chicago's premier department store, Marshall Field's. The occasion: a pitch for Levi's Barnsmen, a line of durable children's jeans, offered by that fastidious fashion critic, that diva of dangars—Darth Vader. Wait a minute. Darth Vader? How, you may ask, does Mr. Vader—who wears a black robe and a black mask—qualify as the Mr. Fieldswell of the Levi made? It's a representation of Levi's jeans in California. "Marshall Field's is using Darth Vader, not Strauss," he replied. "We made the connection." Our story was then relayed to the Banding and Youth Forum of Field's, where we were "No comment." Silence is golden, and so are the profits on STAR Wars merchandise. About \$300 worth by the end of this year, according to executives of Toys, which acquired the film after industry analysts turned down George

a dozen of dangars?

"We're with you!"

We asked the H.E. Harris company, manufacturers of some things called, believe it or not, The Star Wars Poster Stamp Collecting Kit: "whether there wasn't some form of exploitation going on here." "We have to use the word 'exploitation,'" said a company representative. "It has a negative connotation, like grunting your hand caught in the cookie jar."

Using means to sell toys isn't a new idea (in 1915, there were lines of Charlie Chaplin merchandise), but Lucasfilm Ltd. is the first producer to loan and operate its own fan club (50,000 members at \$5 apiece) to help keep interest high and sales booming. And booming is the word. All told, STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK could rack up as much as \$600 million in sales of related merchandise, a phenomenon which makes the combined profits of Batman, Dave Crockett and Mickey Mouse look like small change. That's a lot to be reckoned with.



Lucas' idea of R2D2 mugs and little wind-up robots. And that figure is just for the toys and action figures, and doesn't include the millions of books, records, masks, shirts, posters, bedding, food, toothbrushes, rags, sunglasses, calendars, models, lunchboxes, underwear and yes, R2D2 mugs, that have been shipped up by an eager public.

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So Darth Vader's appearance in an ad for Levi's shouldn't come as any great surprise. Sellers of a conservative product, no matter how unimpaired by recent space jumps on the STAR Wars bandwagon, taking care for things they can afford a deal of example. Saturday morning cartoons were reportedly more this spring by Underwood's, with R2D2 and Yoda hooding in with Darth Vader. R2D2 and C3PO, of course, with the Amblin Entertainment. "Don't be silly. R2D2 is for Earthlings," the price of the Underwood can buy more Fruit of the Loom than a dozen comic books. Most kids miss out just not underwear with and R2D2 and Yoda on.

It's even harder for adults to think of STAR WARS as another. During a week in the potencies of the takeover of the franchise, London and the economy, guns were over of Time magazine. None other than D. H. Lawrence, who has been borrowing the EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, we're surprised that time to pose for the magazine with plugging all that underwear.

John
Carpenter
The director who came in
from the fogan open letter
to Universal and
Dino De Laurentiis
by Paul Mandell

Can film
producers
hope to
improve
on a film
classic?
No. They
only hope
to get rich
trying.

THE SPECIAL EFFECTS OF
FLESH GORDON

Setting the record straight, and giving
credit where credit is due.

by Mark Wolf

Setting the record straight, and giving credit where credit is due. The time is 1968. The place Chicago's premier department store, Marshall Field's. The occasion: a pitch for Levi's Barnsmen, a line of durable children's jeans, offered by that fastidious fashion critic, that diva of dangars—Darth Vader. Wait a minute. Darth Vader? How, you may ask, does Mr. Vader—who wears a black robe and a black mask—qualify as the Mr. Fieldswell of the Levi made? It's a representation of Levi's jeans in California. "Marshall Field's is using Darth Vader, not Strauss," he replied. "We made the connection." Our story was then relayed to the Banding and Youth Forum of Field's, where we were "No comment." Silence is golden, and so are the profits on STAR Wars merchandise. About \$300 worth by the end of this year, according to executives of Toys, which acquired the film after industry analysts turned down George

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the flick from the flack.

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

SAVING VIDEOTAPE

**HOW TO USE YOUR
VCR TAPE COUNTER**

By E.G. Sunden

"LET'S SEE, I'VE GOT ONE LOU Grant, one M*A*S*H, and two commercials that I missed at Beta 3, three rounds of the Leonard/Duran fight at Beta 2 and four assorted pieces from *Saturday Night Live* on this L500 and I wonder, how many *Bugs Bunny* cartoons do I have room for?"

Sound familiar? What's the solution? "Maybe I should sit there with a stop watch and time the material as I'm recording, or just count how many minutes have gone by on the timer. Christ, that'll get confusing when I mix speeds, and what happens when I'm not home and have the beast programmed?"

Learning to use any VCR efficiently can be just as frustrating as trying to decide which one to buy. Regardless of the destruction manual, the counter never makes sense, and at anywhere from \$10 to \$25 per cassette, it is exasperating not to be able to use every last inch of that expensive video tape. Here are two ways of dealing with it.

FAST AND DIRTY

To make use of this information, you will need a calculator. The \$14 I spent on a small one has saved me untold dollars of lost/unused tape.

The counter on my Zenith 9700J reads about 890 from end to end of an L500. What is it counting? An L500 is supposed to have 500 feet of tape, that's 152.4 meters, ten times that many centimeters, 6000 inches and . . . Great Horny toads! *It's not counting anything.* Every different type of VCR that I have used comes up with different numbers for supposedly identical lengths of tape. None of them ever seemed to make sense.

So let's give these numbers an arbitrary name so we'll have something to call them, since we cannot call them "feet" or "inches" or "meters." Let's call them vidgits.

How ever many vidgits your counter comes up with can be made relative and useable when considered against *time*. I must stress that it does not matter what format type of machine you have, vidgits are usable (though different) on Beta, VHS, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch Umatic and even on the newest $\frac{1}{4}$ inch video decks. The nicest advantage to the fast and dirty system is that it *does not matter* what speed you've used. Here's an example:

Take a tape and slap it into your machine, make sure it is rewound all the way and then fast forward it to the end *after zeroing* the counter. The number the counter comes up with at the end of the fast forward (be sure to turn your index function off if you have one) is the base number to use in determining relative lengths of recorded material. On one particular RCA VCT 400 (VHS/Selectavision), with a T-120 (also known as a VK-250) standard 2/4/6 hour tape, the counter shows 847 vidgits. 847 divided by 120 (2 hours times 60 minutes per hour) gives us 7.06 vidgits per minute on SP (fast). One *M*A*S*H* episode minus commercials on SP shows up as 145 vidgits, or, (145 divided by 7.06) approximately 20½ minutes of recorded material. That leaves at least 99½ minutes of useable tape left on SP, 199 minutes at LP and 298½ minutes (4 hours 58½ minutes) at SLP (the six-hour speed). Almost sounds like an algebra lecture, doesn't it?

Although, at first, crunching these numbers may seem like a hassle, I can't think of a better way to do it—other than by direct timing.

In a practical application, using vidgits

***if it doesn't measure
length, time or speed,
what does it count??***

Every different type of VCR I have used comes up with different numbers on their tape counters for supposedly identical lengths of tape—none of them ever seem to make sense.

True tape speed is not indicated by how long a tape will play or record but by how fast the tape travels past the head.

and time might look like this: One particular Fuji L500 (a 2/3 hour Beta format tape) has 897 vidgits, *American Grafitti* occupies 829 vidgits at Beta 2. 897 divided by 120 (2 hours) is 7.475 vidgits per minute. 829 divided by 7.475 is 110.90 or roughly 111 minutes. That leaves 9 minutes at Beta 2 if the tape runs *exactly* 120 minutes (12 minutes at Beta 3), enough time for at least one 8 minute *Bugs Bunny* cartoon! The reason I point out the *if* and the *exactly* above can be relatively important.

A seemingly more complex problem, one *M*A*S*H*, one *Lou Grant*, etc., is actually no more complex than if you had recorded just one program at one speed. Zero the counter, fast forward to the end of the pre-recorded material (the index function helps a lot if your machine has one) note the number, then fast forward to the end of the tape.

If you consistently use the same brand of tape you can run through one sample tape and can generally trust the resulting end number, although I have noted some differences. Divide the total number of vidgits by the number of minutes possible at the fastest speed (i.e. the least number of minutes possible), then use the number of vidgits per minute to divide the difference between the end of your recorded material and the total number of vidgits on the tape. That should tell you how much time you have left on that particular tape in the fastest mode.

I have mentioned the *index* function a number of times. Some machines have it, some do not. What it does is electronically mark the beginning or end of a section of recorded material. The index function is a great help in finding the end of a program but can be a real pain when your intent is to rewind the tape to the beginning. Unless you are rewinding to a specific spot, you might want to turn off the index function during rewind.

HOW NOT TO GET MIXED UP WHILE MIXING TAPE SPEEDS

Eventually, it may become necessary to record whole programs or sections of things at different speeds on the same cassette. When you are using the vidgit system, you are generally only looking for the amount of useable tape left on a particular cassette—the speed at which you have recorded material that is already on the tape is irrelevant. Determining *what speed* to record something at leads us to the second method of dealing with counters. Whereas you can get a close approximation with the fast and dirty method, if you are genuinely interested in squeezing out every last quarter inch the number crunching gets a little more complex.

The relationship between tape speeds for both VHS and Beta goes like this:

Beta 1 or *SP* multiplied by 2 EQUALS *Beta 2* or *LP* multiplied by 1.5 EQUALS *Beta 3* or *SLP*.

Here is a brief list of the commonly available tape lengths and their running times:

BETA	BETA 1	BETA 2	BETA 3
L125	15 min.	30 min.	45 min.
L250	30 min.	60 min.	90 min.
L370	45 min.	90 min.	135 min.
L500	60 min.	120 min.	180 min.
L750	90 min.	180 min.	270 min.
L830	110 min.	200 min.	300 min.

NOTE: Beta tape lengths are used in the coding of the tape model number. They are all prefaced with the letter "L" (probably for 'length'), and the number indicates the number of feet of tape that cassette supposedly contains. L500 has 500 feet of tape, L750, 750 feet of tape, and so on.

	VHS	SP	LP	SLP
T-30	223 ft./68 meters	30 min.	60 min.	90 min.
T-60	420 ft./128 meters	60 min.	120 min.	180 min.
T-90	617 ft./188 meters	90 min.	180 min.	270 min.
T-120	814 ft./248 meters	120 min.	240 min.	360 min.

VHS tapes are coded by their SP playing time.

AND HERE'S THE RUB

True *tape speed* is not indicated by how long a tape will play or record but by how fast the tape travels past the head. Sample: audio tape speeds are 3¾ ips (inches per second), 7½ ips, and 15 ips (some studio quality reel to reel audio tape recorders can run at 30 ips). Video tape is *much* different. Here is what I've been able to dig up.

BETA	BETA 1	BETA 2	BETA 3
	4.0 cm/sec	2.0 cm/sec	1.33 cm/sec
VHS	SP	LP	SLP
	33.35 mm/sec	16.67 mm/sec	11.11 mm/sec
		OR	
	1.3 ips	.65 ips	.43 ips

NOTE: The accuracy of these figures relies solely on information supplied by different manufacturers and *may be* approximations.

THE RUB

If tape travels past the head at 2 centimeters per second on Beta 2 for 2 hours, in that period of time, 14,400 centimeters of tape will have passed the record/playback head. That's 144 meters or 472.44 feet.

Now wait a *consarned* minute! It says right here on the label there are 500 feet of tape on this L500! Does that mean that there are an extra 27.56 feet of tape left after I have recorded two hours at Beta 2?

At .43 ips (SLP) for 814 feet you should get 378.6 minutes. Wait a minute, that's not 6 hours! That's 6 hours and 18 and a fraction minutes! Throw the vidgits out the window!

By the information supplied by different

manufacturers, here are what your actual running times should be, not taking into consideration non-useable tape (leader tape and tape that gets wound into the tape transport during loading which cannot be passed over the record/playback head and cannot be used).

Wait a minute, let's run a practical test on this before we get too excited. I just ran an L500 through my Sony SL 5600 at Beta 2 and guess what? Using an electronic stopwatch, the darned thing ran exactly 2 hours from start to stop. Boy, am I disappointed! They must use approximations in labeling these things. And here I sat, like a dummy for 2 hours figuring out all of these "exact" running times. Well, I guess you just can't trust anyone these days, back to the relationship between tape speeds.

Beta 1 (the fastest speed) runs half as long as Beta 2 and $\frac{1}{3}$ as long as Beta 3. The same relationship exists between the VHS speeds.

To convert Beta 1 vidgits to Beta 2 (SP to LP), divide by 2.

To convert Beta 1 vidgits to Beta 3 (SP to SLP), divide by 3.

To convert Beta 3 to Beta 1 (SLP to SP), multiply by 3, for Beta 3 to Beta 2 (SLP to LP), multiply by 1.5 and for Beta 2 to Beta 1 (LP to SP), multiply by 2, or divide by .5, it's the same thing.

In a typical application it might look like this (using the numbers from the previously mentioned, fictitious *M*A*S*H* episode): Recorded at SP, the program takes up 145 vidgits of tape, leaving 702 vidgits. Recorded on LP it would take up 72.5 vidgits leaving 774.5, or, SP 109.7 minutes, LP 219.4 minutes, SLP 329.1 minutes. Recorded at SLP it would take up just 48.33 vidgits leaving a whopping 798.67 vidgits. SP 113.12 minutes, LP 226.25 minutes, SLP 339.37 minutes, (5 hours 39 and a tad minutes).

I'm really beginning to feel like a math teacher, so to close, I'll just add that I hope you can multiply your fun with your VCR by subtracting the wasted empty tape from your library.

ALTERNATE ENDING

All of this wonderful new knowledge is not going to do anyone any good if the basics are not accessible and useable. Record keeping is every bit as important as learning to be comfortable with the number crunching process. It works out best, for me, to slip a 3X5 index card into the cassette storage box and every time I add something to the tape, I update the vidgit readings. That way, I have an instantly available record of how much usable tape is left on each cassette. It is always important to know if I can squeeze in one more long-eared, carrot chomping cartoon. ■

It says on the cassette label there are 500 feet of tape on the L500—does that mean there are an extra 27.56 feet of tape left after recording two hours at Beta II?

Guide To Video Cassette Tape Lengths

BETA	BETA 1	BETA 2	BETA 3
L125	15.92 min.	31.75 min.	47.75 min.
L250	31.75 min.	63.50 min.	95.49 min.
L370	46.99 min.	93.98 min.	141.33 min.
L500	63.50 min.	127.00 min.	190.98 min.
L750	95.25 min.	190.50 min.	286.47 min.
L830	105.41 min.	210.82 min.	317.03 min.
VHS	SP	LP	SLP
T-30	34.57 min.	69.14 min.	103.72 min.
T-60	65.11 min.	130.23 min.	195.34 min.
T-90	95.66 min.	191.31 min.	286.97 min.
T-120	126.20 min.	252.40 min.	378.60 min.

NEW RELEASES

MAGNETIC VIDEO (tape):

(23434 Industrial Park Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48204)

Apocalypse Now—(1979), Francis Ford Coppola's epic length Vietnam War blockbuster, starring Marlon Brando, Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall, and Frederic Forrest.

The Last Tango In Paris—(1973), Marlon Brando stars with Maria Schneider in this French/Italian flick about love, lust, and butter. Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci.

Exodus—(1960), based on the Leon Uris novel of the liberation of Israel from British rule, starring Paul Newman, Eva Maria Saint, Ralph Richardson, Sal Mineo, and a cast of thousands. Otto Preminger, director.

Final Countdown—(1980), a present-day nuclear aircraft carrier is swept back in time to the day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Starring Kirk Douglas.

Black Stallion—(1979), the story of a boy and his horse, starring Kelly Reno, Mickey Rooney, and Teri Garr. Beautifully directed by Carroll Ballard.

Nine To Five—(1980), Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, and Dolly Parton star as three hassled secretaries caught up in a plot to murder their boss. Colin Higgins, director.

Coming Home—(1978), winner of several Academy Awards, including best actress for Jane Fonda as the wife of a returning Vietnam veteran. Also stars Jon Voight and Bruce Dern. Directed by Hal Ashby.

Lord of the Rings—(1978), director Ralph Bakshi's animated adaptation of the J.R.R. Tolkien fantasy classic. Christopher Guard, William Squire, and John Hurt star as some of the voices.

Midnight Cowboy—(1969), Oscar-winning X-rated portrayal of the seamier side of New York's nightlife, starring Jon Voight, Dustin Hoffman, and Sylvia Miles. John Schlesinger, director.

Carrie—(1976), Brian DePalma's gory story about a much picked upon high school girl who takes her revenge with telekinetic powers. Stars Sissy Spacek, Piper Laurie, William Katt, and John Travolta.

Casablanca—(1942), Humphrey Bogart at his best as the jaded Rick, caught up in love and war in remote Casablanca. Also stars Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains, and Sidney Greenstreet. Michael Curtiz, director.

The Pink Panther—(1964), the first of the Inspector Clouseau movies dealing with the bumbling French policeman, starring Peter Sellers, David Niven, and Robert Wagner. Directed by Blake Edwards.

Apache—(1954), a pacifist Indian comes up against the U.S. Cavalry. Stars Burt Lancaster, Jean Peters, and Charles Bronson. Robert Aldrich, director.

The Barefoot Contessa—(1954), the rise to stardom of beautiful Ava Gardner under Humphrey Bogart's wing. Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz.

A Bridge Too Far—(1977), director Richard Attenborough's very long account of a true 1944 Allied airdrop in Nazi occupied Holland. Stars Dirk Bogart, James Caan, Gene Hackman, and a distinguished international cast.

The Apartment—(1960), the story of an ambitious employee who loans his apartment to his philandering boss. Billy Wilder directed, Jack Lemmon, Fred MacMurray, and Shirley MacLaine star.

Semi-Tough—(1977), comedy concerning the lives and hard-hitting loves of pro football players Burt Reynolds and Kris Kristofferson, also starring Jill Clayburgh. Michael Ritchie, director.

Sleeper—(1973), Woody Allen's answer to future shock, with Diane Keaton and John Beck.

42nd Street—(1933), Busby Berkeley's music highlights the story of a Broadway stand-in catapulted to stardom. Stars Warner Baxter, Ruby Keeler, and Dick Powell.

The Thomas Crown Affair—(1968); millionaire Steve McQueen versus investigator Faye Dunaway in a big insurance scam. Norman Jewison, director.

West Side Story—(1961), the Leonard Bernstein/Stephen Sondheim score of the Broadway musical translated to film; an updated version of the Romeo and Juliet story. Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, and Rita Moreno star. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins directed.

F.I.S.T.—(1978), Sylvester Stallone's story of the rise of a young union leader from the tumultuous days of the 1930s to his Jimmy Hoffa-like end, directed by Norman Jewison.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers—(1978), remake of the classic 1956 horror flick without the McCarthyesque overtones. Stars Donald Sutherland, Leonard Nimoy, and Brooke Adams. Directed by Phillip Kaufman.

Butley—(1974), Alan Bates plays the title character, an English lecturer at a university whose life is falling apart. With Jessica Tandy, Richard O'Callaghan, and Susan Engel. Directed by Harold Pinter.

The Stunt Man—(1980), Peter O'Toole as a film director who will stop at nothing to finish his movie, even the death of his stunt men. Also stars Steve Railsback and Barbara Hershey. Directed by Richard Rush.

Prom Night—(1980), suspense thriller about a killer loose at a high school prom. Stars Leslie Nielsen, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Casey Stevens. Directed by Paul Lynch.

Lost In the Stars—(1974), based on Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country, a drama of race relations in South Africa. With Brock Peters, Melba Moore, and Clifton Davis. Daniel Mann, director.

Norma Rae—(1979), Sally Field won an Oscar for her performance as a textile worker who joins with labor organizer Ron Liebman to unionize a Southern mill. Directed by Martin Ritt.

Breaking Away—(1979), warm-hearted comedy about a group of boys growing up in a small town and one of their number's love of bicycle racing. Dennis Christopher, Dennis Quaid, and Daniel Stern star. Directed by Peter Yates.

The Rose—(1979), Bette Midler stars as a Janis Joplinesque rock singer fighting to stay alive. Also stars Alan Bates and Frederic Forrest. Mark Rydell, director.

Terrytoon Cartons, Vol. 3—(1980), the best of the old Heckle and Jeckle cartoon series.

A Golden Decade of College Football, 1970-1980—(1981), the first sports show produced exclusively for video cassette, featuring the Game of the Decade, the most controversial play, the most unusual play, and more.

Video Playhouse Series, Unicorn Tales Vols. I and II—familiar old children's fables set to modern music and settings. Vol. I includes *Big Apple Birthday* (Alice in Wonderland), *The Magnificent Major* (Wizard of Oz), the Magic Hat (Emperor's New Clothes), and Alex and the Wonderful "Doo Wah" Lamp (Aladdin).

Olympic Highlights of 1976—remember Dorothy Hamill, Bruce Jenner, and Nadia Comaneci? They're all here.

Jack Nicklaus' Sports Clinic—golf champ Nicklaus gives tips to help brush up on your game.

Billie Jean King: Tennis Everyone—from serve to volley, Billie Jean shows us how it is done.

Greatest Sports Legends—the big sports show off their biggest stars and let us in on the legends.

WALT DISNEY HOME VIDEO (tape):

(500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521)

The Love Bug—(1969), the film that introduced the thinking Volkswagen Herbie and his (its?) slapstick antics. Stars Buddy Hackett, Dean Jones, and Michele Lee. Directed by Robert Stevenson.

Escape to Witch Mountain—(1975), Eddie Albert and Ray Milland star in this mystery-thriller about two children pursued by a witch. John Hough, director.

Bedknobs and Broomsticks—(1971), delightful blend of live action and animation in this tale of an amateur witch and her misadventures with her two young charges. Angela Lansbury and Roddy MacDowall star. Robert Stevenson, director.

Hot Lead and Cold Feet—(1978), Western spoof starring Jim Dale, Darren McGavin, and Don Knotts. Directed by Robert Butler.

The Apple Dumpling Gang—(1975), Bill Bixby as a gambler in the Old West who inherits three kids. Also stars Don Knotts and Tim Conway. Norman Tokar, director.

Mickey Mouse Disco—mice and dogs and ducks dance to disco tunes in this special short feature lent free to persons renting Disney flicks from participating video dealers until May.

WARNER HOME VIDEO (tape):

(75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10019)

Tom Horn—(1980), Steve McQueen stars as the legendary bounty hunter, set in Wyoming of 1900. Directed by William Wiard.

Magnum Force—(1973), "Dirty Harry" Callahan is back, this time to clean up the San Francisco police force. Also stars Hal Holbrook and David Soul. Directed by Ted Post.

One Trick Pony—(1980), Paul Simon stars in and contributes the music to this film about a rock and roll singer facing big decisions in his life. With Blair Brown, Rip Torn, Lou Reed, and Joan Hackett. Directed by Robert M. Young

Honeysuckle Rose—(1980), life on the road for the traveling country singer. Stars Willie Nelson, Dyan Cannon, and Slim Pickens. Directed by Jerry Schatzberg.

Oh God, Book II—(1980), George Burns is typecast as God, making his second coming in this sequel to his 1977 role. Directed by Gil Cates.

Caddyshack—(1980), wild and crazy times on the fairway with Chevy Chase, Rodney Dangerfield, Ted Knight, and Bill Murray. Directed by Harold Ramis.

Space Movie—(1980), documentary using footage from NASA showing the U.S. space program from the earliest days of Mercury to the landing on the moon. Tony Palmer directs.

Armstrong—(1973), Federico Fellini's story of a year in the life of a small Adriatic town in the 1930s.

Cries and Whispers—(1972), Ingmar Bergman's touching study of the lives and fantasies of four women: Liv Ullman, Ingrid Thulin, Harriet Andersson, and Kari Sylwan.

Small Change—(1976), a loving and award-winning comedy about the foibles of children as seen through the eyes of director Francois Truffaut.

Big Bad Mama—(1974), action/adventure thriller about lady bandit Angie Dickinson and her daughters Robbie Lee and Susan Sennett. With William Shatner and Tom Skerrit. Roger Corman, director.

Death Race 2000—(1975), in the future, hit and run driving will be a sport and David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone will be two of its biggest stars.

PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO (tape):

(5451 Marathon St., Hollywood, CA 90038)

Airplane—(1980), hysterical comedy spoofing disaster movies and every cliché in the book. Stars Robert Stack, Peter Graves, and Lloyd Bridges. Directed by Jerry Zucker, David Zucker, and Jim Abramson.

Urban Cowboy—(1980), John Travolta helped set the fashion industry on its ear with this portrayal of a factory worker who steps out at night like a latter day cowboy. Directed by James Bridges.

Friday the Thirteenth—(1980), someone is going around killing a lot of people for very little reason. Directed by Sean Cunningham.

Shogun—(1980), a two-hour version of the hit television mini-series starring Richard Chamberlain and Toshiro Mifune.

The Hunter—(1980), Steve McQueen's last film, portraying a real-life bounty hunter in Chicago. Directed by Buzz Kulik.

Rough Cut—(1979), Burt Reynolds is a real smooth operator after a valuable diamond. With Leslie Ann Down and David Niven. Don Siegel, director.

Coast to Coast—(1980), Dyan Cannon and Robert Blake find love and adventure as she runs from killers. Directed by Joseph Sargent.

Barefoot in the Park—(1967), Robert Redford and Jane Fonda as newlyweds in a new apartment and all the weird neighbors that come with it. Directed by Gene Saks.

RCA SELECTAVISION (capacitance disc):

(30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10112)

The Judgement—(1967), features the two-part concluding episode of the old Fugitive television show starring David Janssen, one of the most watched episodes of any TV show in history.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show—(1970-1977), features four classic episodes of the television show that made Mary, Lou, and Ted our buddies. Featured are: "Love is All Around," the premiere episode; "Put On a Happy Face," "Chuckles Bites the Dust," and "The Last Show," the final show in the series.

Little House on the Prairie—(1974), the two-hour pilot of this popular and acclaimed TV show, starring Michael Landon.

MCA DISTRIBUTING CORP. (tape):

(70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City Studios, Universal City, CA 91608)

The Deer Hunter—(1978), brutal tale of friends from a small Pennsylvania steel town who go to Vietnam to win five Academy Awards. Stars Robert DeNiro, Meryl Streep, and John Savage. Michael Cimino, director.

Xanadu—(1980), musical fantasy starring Gene Kelly and Olivia Newton-John, directed by Robert Greenwald.

Smokey and the Bandit II—(1980), Burt Reynolds and Sally Field reprise their roles in this sequel where plenty of cars are smashed up. With Jackie Gleason, Jerry Reed, and Dom DeLuise. Hal Needham, director.

Coal Miner's Daughter—(1980), screen biography of country singer Loretta Lynn as portrayed by Sissy Spacek. Also stars Tommy Lee Jones and Beverly D'Angelo. Michael Apted, director.

The Electric Horseman—(1979), Redford and Fonda are back together with him playing an over-the-hill rodeo champ and she an ambitious television reporter. Directed by Sydney Pollack.

MGM/CBS HOME VIDEO (tape):

(1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019)

Fame—(1980), the trials and tribulations of kids in New York's Performing Arts High School. Directed by Alan Parker.

Oklahoma—(1955), Gordon MacRae, Shirley Jones, Charlotte Greenwood, and Rod Steiger star in this screen adaptation of the Rogers and Hammerstein musical. Fred Zinneman, director.

South Pacific—(1958), more singing and dancing from Rogers and Hammerstein, this time about love and war, starring Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr, and Ray Walston. Directed by Joshua Logan.

Cruising—(1980), Director William Friedkin's study of the homosexual underground as seen through the eyes of undercover cop Al Pacino. With Paul Sorvino.

Carny—(1980), Gary Busey stars and leads a crew of carnival performers in this film. Directed by Robert Kaylor.

Treasure Island—(1934), first screen adaptation of the Robert Louis Stevenson classic with Wallace Beery, Jackie Cooper, Lewis Stone, and Lionel Barrymore. Victor Fleming, director.

Being There—(1979), Peter Sellers' penultimate performance as the feeble-minded gardener Chance who becomes the darling of Washington society and politics. With Shirley MacLaine, Melvyn Douglas, and Jack Warden. Hal Ashby, director.

John F. Kennedy—(1980), first in a series of Great Figures In History from the CBS News Collector's Series. A 105 minute documentary-profile of the late president utilizing film footage from the CBS News archives.

Mutiny on the Bounty—(1962), remake of the 1935 classic telling the true story of a mutiny aboard a British man o' war. Stars Marlon Brando, Trevor Howard, and Richard Harris. Directed by Lewis Milestone.

VIDEO GEMS (tape):

(731 N. La Brea, Los Angeles, CA 90038)

Suzanne—(1980), the chilling tale of a Charlie Manson-like film director and what he does to beautiful young Sondra Locke. With Gene Barry and Richard Dreyfuss. This film won several film festivals but was never theatrically released. Michael Barry, director.

The Young Tiger—kung-fu action with Jackie Chan, the man most people in the know consider a worthy successor to Bruce Lee.

The Greatest Revenge—more martial arts action, this time with Bruce Le (not to be confused with the original).

Andy Warhol's Frankenstein—(1972), the master of soupcan paintings turns his talents to this X-rated—

mostly for blood and gore—version of the Mary Shelley horror story.

Andy Warhol's Dracula—(1972), Warhol takes on Bram Stoker's creature of the night in this X-rated version. Once again, blood and guts are the main reason for this.

VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS, INC. (tape):

(6555 E. Skelly Dr., Tulsa, OK 74145)

Video Communications has released a series of classic old westerns, including:

Arizona Days—(1937), with singing-cowboy star Tex Ritter.

Riders of the Rockies—(1938), with Tex Ritter.

The Traitor—(1936), with Tim McCoy.

Six Shootin' Sheriff—(1938), with Ken Maynard.

Forbidden Trail—(1933), starring Buck Jones, Tim McCoy, and Raymond Hatton.

Boiling Point—(1932), with Hoot Gibson.

Arizona Raiders—(1965), starring Buster Crabbe.

Feud of the West—(1937), with Hoot Gibson.

Guns of Fury—(1945), starring Duncan Renaldo.

In Old Mexico—(1945), with Duncan Renaldo.

Ghost Patrol—(1936), with Tim McCoy.

Phantom Rancher—(1938), starring Ken Maynard.

Theatre of Death—(1966), is a vampire the one responsible for a series of grisly murders in Paris? Stars Christopher Lee and Lelia Goldoni. Directed by Samuel Gallu.

Night Creature—(1979), it's man vs. killer black leopard on a private island estate. With Donald Pleasence and Nancy Kwan. Directed by Lee Madden.

The Cross and the Switchblade—(1972), Pat Boone as a crusading minister who gets involved in a war between New York street gangs. With Erik Estrada and Jackie Giroux. Don Murray, director.

KARL VIDEO CORP. (tape):

(129 Cabrillo St., Costa Mesa, CA 92627)

Exercise Now—a 50-minute exercise program produced especially for tape and led by professional physical education instructors.

Speed Reading—a complete one hour course full of the type of stuff that made Evelyn Wood famous.

Video First Aid Kit—a unique and handy guide to first aid, showing "how to" handle most things from simple cuts to more severe burns and shock.

SELECT/ESSEX VIDEO (tape):

(1680 N. Vine St., Hollywood, CA 90028)

How To Win In Blackjack—blackjack expert Ken Uston gives the tips that will help you reach "21."

DAYA INC. (tape):

(132 North Ave., Westport, CT 06880)

Video Needlecrafts—needlepoint experts Helen Russo and daughter Dee show you how it's done.

NEXT ISSUE

MONTY PYTHON INVADES HOME VIDEO!

A GUIDE TO SPORTS PROGRAMMING

A LOOK AT THE TECHNICOLOR MINI-VCR

PRODUCING FOR PUBLIC ACCESS STATIONS

Video Action—May, 1981—on sale April 9
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NEW RELEASES
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REVIEWS

HOME COMPUTERS

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THE NEW RCA
VIDEODISC SYSTEM:

AN INTERVIEW WITH
PROGRAMMING CHIEF
HERB SCHLOSSER



CHEAP!

11:17 AM

8:00

BETA
LATE THAN
NEVER

VISION

40

12:00

ENGEL

Look!

FX

7400

PLEASE
GIVE ME
A HOME!

Jim Engel



A Guide to Cheap VCRs

By Paul Kupperberg

Older may not be better
but it sure can be cheaper.

THE NETWORKS HAVE DONE it to you again.

As you look through the *TV Guide* to see what there is to see this evening, you notice that there is not one but *three* programs you have been dying to see—all on different networks and all on at the same time. CBS is showing that box office smash you missed in the theater last year; NBC has decided to rerun one of your all time favorite classic films, and ABC is running a special guest-

starring all your most loved performers.

What's a television viewer to do? You can stand to miss one of these programs, but certainly not two out of the three. All you can do is hope that the networks will schedule these shows in the reruns so as not to put them into competition the next time around. You will just have to get used to being a pawn in the great ratings race that created this conflicting scheduling in the first place.

Or, you could record one of the programs for viewing at a later time with your handy dandy video cassette recorder while you watch a second show "live."

The home video cassette recorder was the first true new breakthrough in television since the introduction of the tube itself. For the first time, the television viewer was freed from the constraints of network programming and was well on his way to gaining final mastery over his television set. This newest wave in the 30-year-long video revolution is well on its way to becoming a permanent fixture alongside the familiar television set in households across the country, with hundreds of thousands of VCRs being purchased every year.

But as common and convenient as the VCR may be, it still represents a sizable investment for the average person. New machines cost as much as \$1400, and you will find that as time goes by you will be spending that much and more on blank and prerecorded tapes. Owning a VCR is a long-term commitment in terms of both time and money.

There are, of course, ways to keep costs down: you can buy your blank tape in bulk lots—usually a case of ten—and keep your purchases of prerecorded material down to a minimum.

More importantly, you can shave a few bucks off the price of the VCR itself, provided you are willing to shop around and you do not mind buying a unit that lacks many of the newest features that make later model VCRs so expensive.

Where can you get a—*comparatively*—cheap VCR? Better still, what is cheap? Well, nothing much these days. But with the latest special effect-laden models running anywhere from \$1100 to \$1400, you can consider yourself lucky if you pay less than \$900. It is not uncommon to find older model VCRs

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for around \$650, and perhaps even less for reconditioned units.

Basically, the question of what you will have to pay for your VCR comes down to what you are looking for in a video cassette recorder. Do you *really* need fast forward scan, slow motion, stop action, remote control, two week programmable memory, and the rest? Sure, they are fun to have, but are they necessary? Remember, you will be paying several hundred dollars more for your fun.

If all you are looking for is a machine to record shows and sporting events while you watch something else, or to catch a program while you are out, or play rented tapes, then fancy gizmos are superfluous. For most people, the most rudimentary 24 hour programmable is all that is needed.

Once you have made up your mind on the features you do and do not want, it is time to go VCR hunting. If you are after a bargain stay away from the larger department store chains. Though most—like Sears, J.C. Penney, and Marshall Fields—stock a good supply, their retail mark-up policies usually preclude bargains. Except for the rare sale or selling off of back models to make room for the new, they charge top dollar and even their best sale prices are generally higher than you would pay elsewhere.

Video specialty stores are a good place to look. They will often keep older model VCRs in stock, and some sell used, reconditioned units that they have taken as trade-ins. Video stores also have it over department stores in that they generally employ self-made specialists as salesmen who can do a better job of answering your questions about what you are getting. It is not unusual for a VCR owner to see his video store as a sort of clubhouse where he can meet others with whom he can swap everything from tapes to machines. Like the proverbial used car you are not going to buy a high-ticket item like a VCR unless the person you are buying it from gives you confidence and can competently assuage your worries with the right answers.

Perhaps the best place to search for bargains is in warehouse stores. Everything they sell is cheaper because they do not have the mammoth overhead of the fancier video

showplaces: the VCRs are stacked in their boxes in a warehouse, you walk in, make your choice, pay your money, and carry it out to your car. It may not be overly pleasing to the eye, but warehouse outlets more than make up for their lack of aesthetics with significantly lower prices.

If you are into instant gratification, the next place to search for your cheap VCR may not be to your liking—the classified ads of your local paper. Many people sell their VCRs this way and, when you buy from an individual rather than a store or warehouse outlet, you will pay less. You will also be taking a bigger chance. Stores—and the manufacturers—give warranties on new or reconditioned machines. Individuals do not. If you take home your VCR only to find out a week later that it is defective, you are out of luck. The money you saved on the machine's purchase will come in handy to pay for the repairs.

There are also a large number of "trading post" magazines on the newsstands that consist of nothing but thousands of classified advertisements for everything from boats to brass beds. The video cassette recorder pops up somewhere in between. Again, you may get yourself a bargain buying from an individual, or you could wind up with a turkey. Just remember, if the deal being offered sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

One thing to keep in mind is the question of compatibility. There may only be two major formats—VHS and Beta—but there are some difficulties in playing tapes recorded on earlier models on some of the more recent units. VHS may be VHS, and Beta Beta, but that does not mean there is an across-the-board compatibility built into the machines. Of course, compatibility is largely irrelevant if all you intend to do is have the machine watch television for you when you cannot.

Special sales and warehouse outlets aside, there are several "outmoded" model VCRs on the market, many of which sell for \$900 or less at the manufacturer's suggested retail price. But these prices are only suggestions and many dealers are all too willing to undercut that to move their stock of older machines.

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Here are some of the models to look for:

Curtis Mathes F740: This VHS format VCR comes with two/four/six hour recording times, rotary tuning and a 24-hour timer. \$799.95, retail.

J.C. Penney R855-1665A: Another two/four/six hour VHS machine, also with a 24-hour on/off timer. \$899.00, retail.

Sharp VC-7400: This VHS VCR has two and six hour recording, a 24-hour clock/timer, touch-button tuning with AFT, soft-touch solenoid controls, an LED readout for tape remaining, four-digit tape counter, and direct drive and capstan servo. \$899.00, retail.

Sanyo VTC 9100A: Up to three hours recording time, compatible with the Beta II system. Other features include 24-hour timer on/off, built-in rotary VHF/UHF tuners, LED digital clock/timer, remote control pause, memory tape counters, and a switchable RF module for use on channels three or four. \$695, retail.

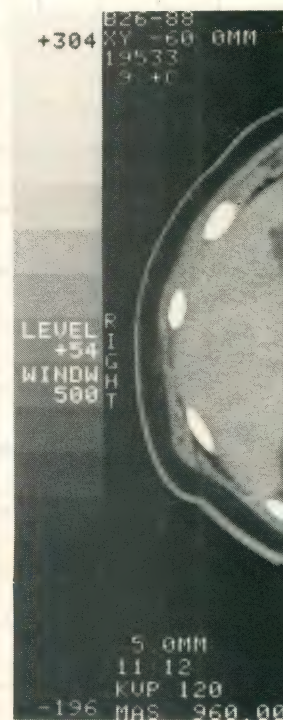
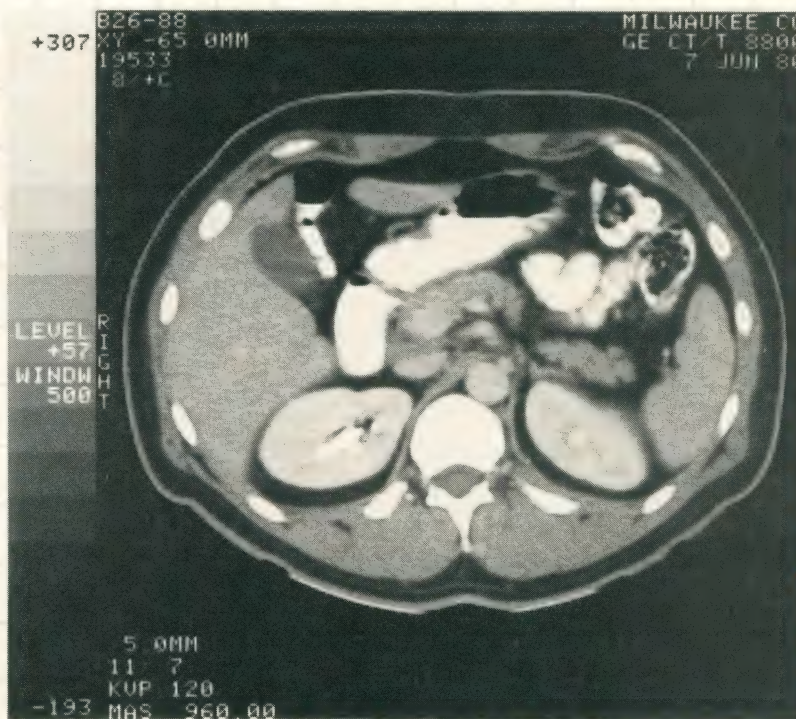
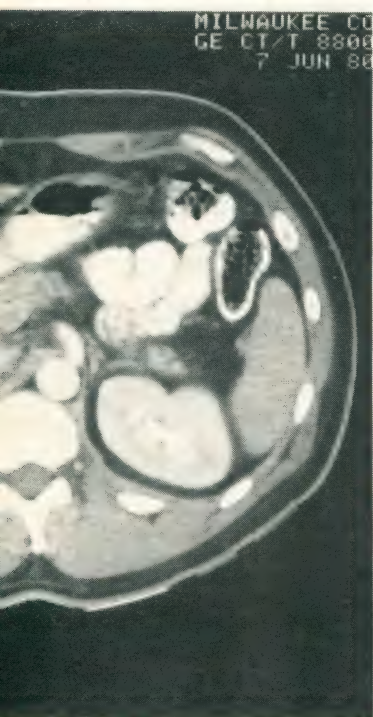
Sears 53055: A Beta system with single speed (Beta II), record, 24-hour single event programming and audio dubbing. \$685, retail.

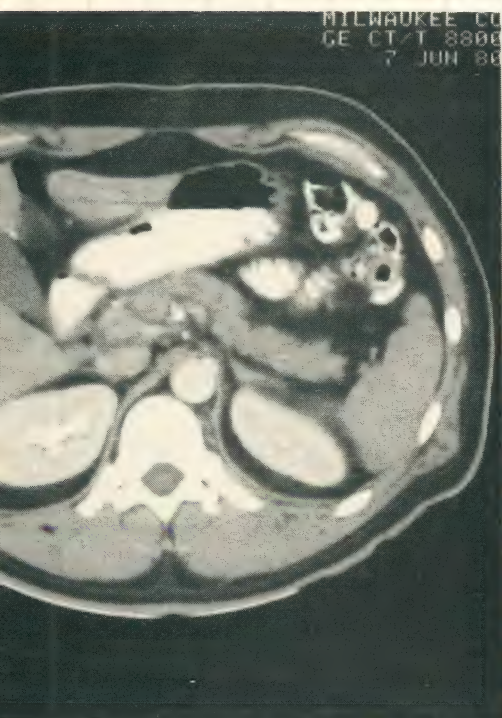
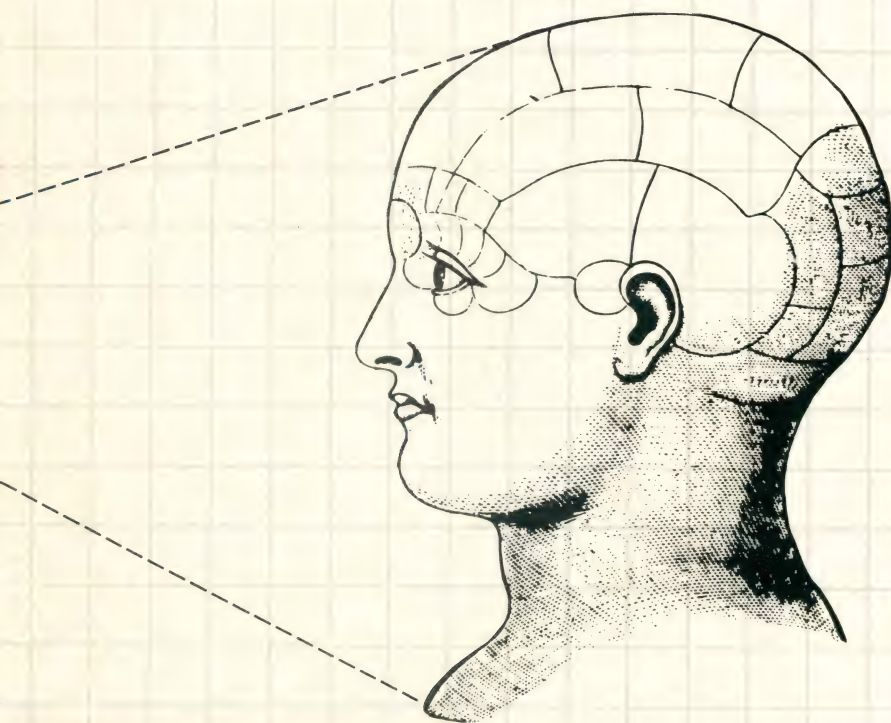
There are, as has been mentioned, other VCRs still available through one outlet or another, most notably the early model Beta I units. Still, the abovementioned video cassette recorders give a fair indication of what type of features you can get on an inexpensive unit. For the most part it is nothing fancy, with the bulk of the more enticing special effects available on the later, more expensive models manufactured by just about everybody.

Finding the inexpensive VCR to suit your needs is by no means an impossible feat. It does take a little comparison shopping, some legwork, and a fair amount of patience; it may take you a couple of weeks to find the VCR that fits your dreams as well as your budget. But if you are really set on having a video cassette recorder of your own, it is something that can be done. After all, isn't it worth a little work to at last be able to take control of your television set? After 33 years, it is about time. ■

MEDICAL Video

With the revolutionary CAT Scan, television now can look at you.





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By T.B. Martin

TELEVISION. IT CONJURES images of favorite shows or particularly disliked commercials, but it can also bring forth the exact position of a brain tumor or a growth in the lung. Television sometimes eliminates the need for going under the knife so that doctors can tell whether or not there is something destructive growing within the recesses of the body.

When the conversation turns to television, the farthest from most people's minds is the fact that the cathode ray tube and television screen, linked to special machinery (sometimes computers), have become integral weapons in the armament of modern medicine. Numerous diagnostic machines look inside—and sometimes outside—the body to determine what is dysfunctioning and why. More and more of these machines use television to display the news, both good and bad.

For example, *ultrasound* machinery

translates waves of frequencies beyond the range of human hearing, bounced off various areas of the body, into visual (black & white) images on a television. It has been used to tell whether a fetus is dead or merely dormant, to guide a collection needle in particularly touchy biopsies, and to display accurate information about the extent of congenital heart disease. *Thermography* equipment employs special chemical-filled color cameras to show, to the layman, a psychedelic portrait of exterior human anatomy.

To the trained eye the temperatures, or heat patterns, of the body are presented in all their multicolored glory. The anatomical response of sexual arousal, the extent of arteriosclerosis, the degree of blood flow after surgical procedures—all these and more can be scrutinized through thermography.

These are only two of the more widely-used "wonder machines" of modern diagnostic medicine. Perhaps the largest technological blessing, though, has been the CAT scanner. "CAT" is short for *computerized axial tomography*. Essentially, the CAT scanner is an extremely sophisticated three-quarter million dollar X-ray machine, but "the CAT" is a giant leap over what we think of as regular X-ray machines.

Standard X-ray technology represented a miraculous breakthrough when it finally reached general medical use, despite many early incidents of radiation burns and radiation poisoning among both patients and medical personnel alike. There were many wondrous claims for this new, weird technology which could peer through clothing and skin. A newspaper at the turn of the century stated very matter-of-factly that medical schools had begun using X-rays to transfer textbook pages directly to the brains of students. Another deluded enthusiast claimed he had photographed the soul of man. An English clothing manufacturer marketed "X-ray proof" undergarments to spoil the fun of suspected high-tech voyeurs.

One claim for the X-ray which has never been disputed is its ability to pass through solid objects and cause fluorescence; many times when the solid object has been the human body the fluorescence "lit up" its interior the result has been more

accurate surgery and sometimes a longer life. Those who have had broken bones, particularly hairline fractures, can attest to their blessings.

There are some inherent drawbacks to standard X-ray technology. Of course, the hazard of developing cancer as the result of a high absorption of "rads" is foremost, but in terms of imaging, the flat two-dimensional quality of X-rays sometimes contribute a degree of confusion in certain types of diagnosis.

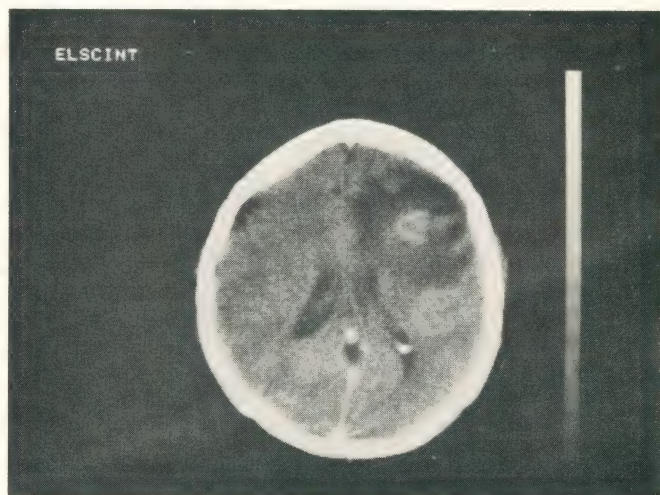
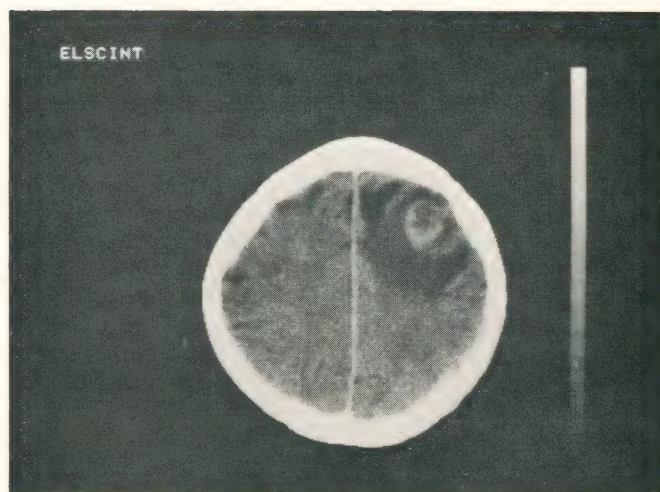
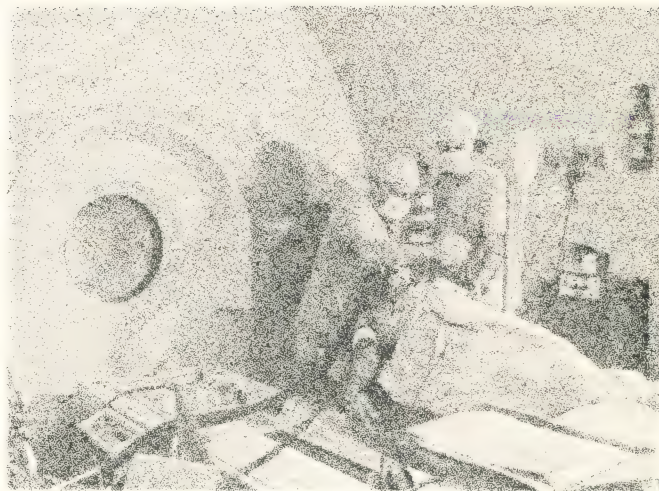
All the details in conventional X-ray photography overlap. Sometimes the tissues or bones which are under observation require numerous pictures taken from different angles before medical people know exactly what they are looking at.

Beyond this, regular X-rays fail to note many important subtleties in tissue densities. This last point is important when something like a suspected growth in the lung area is being considered.

CAT scanners, while taking numerous X-ray shots of particular areas of the patient's body—particularly the head (for which it was originally developed)—do not subject the patient to more radiation than would result from standard X-ray procedures. CAT scans produce images which have a three-dimensional quality. This is the result of the machine's ability to isolate "slices" of the anatomy under observation, shoot that area from different perspectives, combine the information and present it to medical people in images that provide precise information about internal conditions.

These extremely precise images are produced through a large circular tube surrounding the patient. The tube shoots X-ray beams from numerous positions around the patient. After passing through the patient the beams hit extremely sensitive crystal detectors. Electronic signals resulting from this process are fed into a computer which analyzes the signals and transmits the image of the anatomical slice to a television screen. Areas where tumors, blood clots, damage, and other disorders exist can be pinpointed accurately to less than one millimeter.

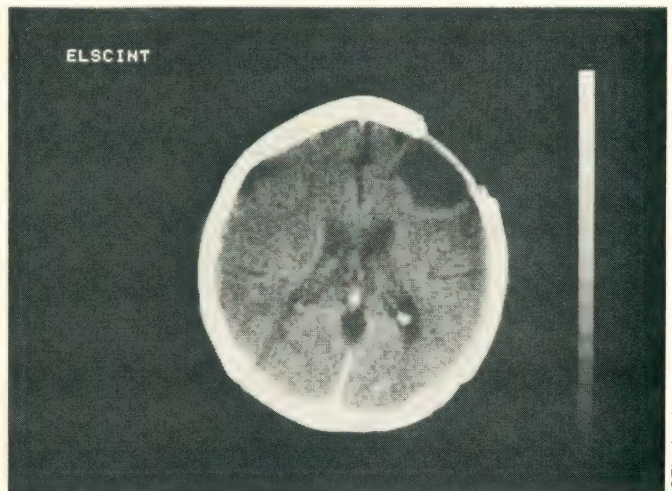
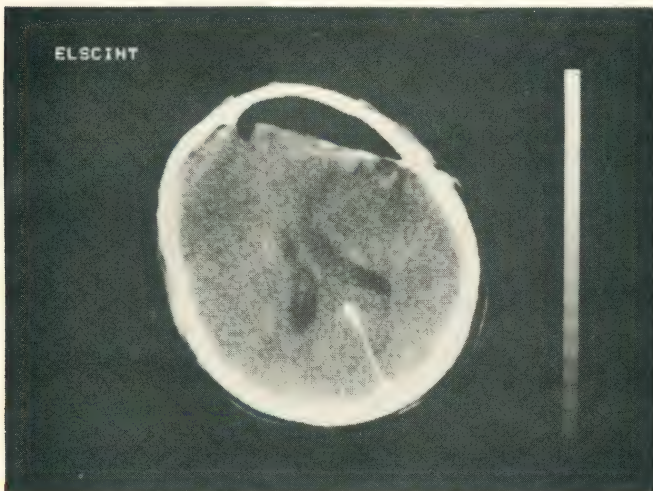
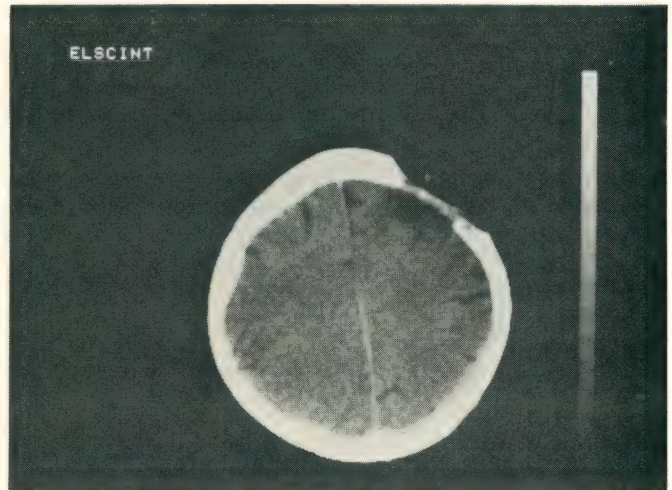
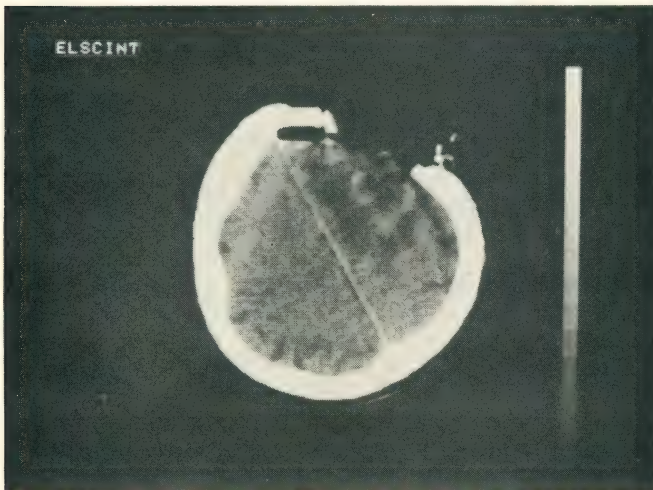
The CAT scan generally is used in diagnosis of cases involving the brain. But in recent years the machine has been used increasingly in



A CT scan of a 57 year old male demonstrated a left frontal glioma.

To achieve a radical excision of the tumor the patient was operated on with intra-operative control by repeated CT examinations.

The operation was performed while the patient was on the Elscint neuro-trolley, adjacent to the scanner, enabling precise repositioning of the scan plane. The operation was interrupted three times and the patient was rescanned to search for remaining

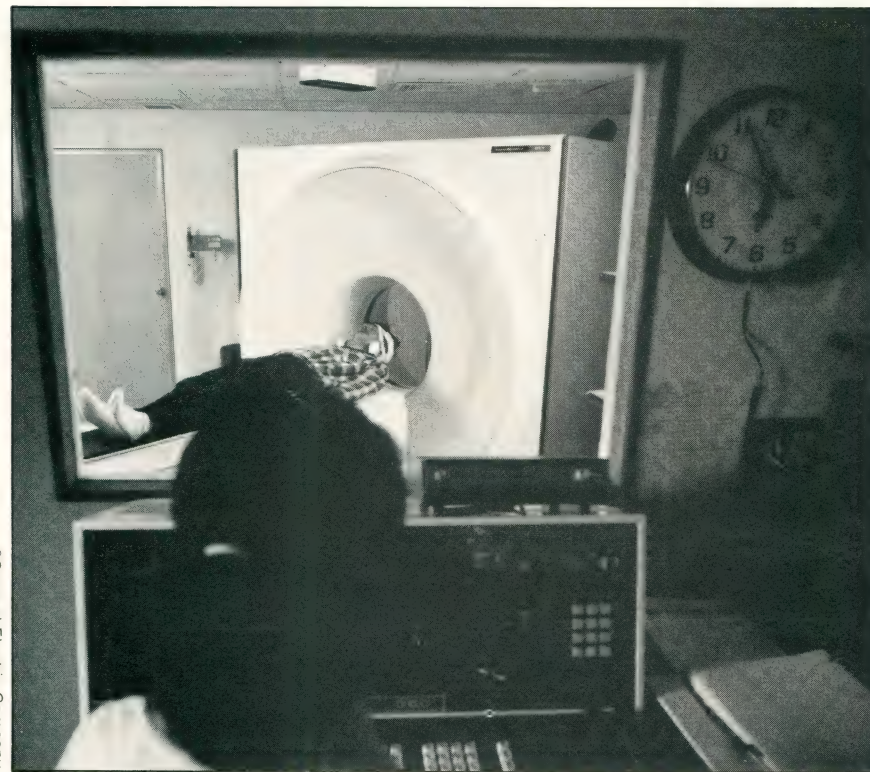


tumor tissue. When no evidence of tumor residue could be detected in the CT images, ten biopsies were taken from the tumor bed. All, consequently, revealed no residue of tumor tissue.

The patient was examined monthly by repeated CT scan. Far right column demonstrates a scan taken recently, four months after operation; so far no signs of tumor recurrence could be detected. In the follow-up examinations, the clinical condition of the patient was found to be satisfactory.

The potentials of the new technique are mainly two: It reveals the extent of the tumor during the operation. It also enables the surgeon to spare vital brain regions in the search for the tumor. This may prove to be of particular importance when surgery is being carried out in the more vulnerable regions of the brain, such as the dominant hemisphere. Is it possible that some tumors, previously considered inoperable, may—through this method—become more accessible.

Medicine truly has come into its golden age with video devices and the future promises even more techniques for diagnosing the ills of man.



General Electric Company

diagnosis of abnormalities involving the spinal cord, lungs, heart, and kidneys. The CAT is equally helpful in monitoring the course of therapy once a particular condition has been defined and treatment has begun. For example, it can be used to locate what areas of the body contain tumors, pinpoint the location of the growths, and when, say, radiation or chemotherapy has been tried the CAT can then see whether therapy has been successful or not.

Presently there are several varieties of the CAT scan on the market. The differences lie in their scanning techniques. They all obtain similar results, though, by making sense of more than 300,000 pieces of data obtained through the absorption of

X-rays in one small area of the body.

Of course, there are some drawbacks. It has not been very useful in dealing with problems of the heart, which constitute a fair proportion of fatalities these days. The beating of the heart can obscure the images obtained through the scan.

An experimental multi-million dollar unit may be able to alleviate this situation. Currently being tested at the Mayo Clinic is the *Dynamic Scanning Research* (DSR) machine. Somewhat similar to the CAT scan, the DSR's main ability is to make a three-dimensional image of whatever organ is under observation, particularly the heart. The image appears on the video screen and medical technologists eliminate

those areas which are extraneous to their search. Only the part of the organ which is being checked for disorders remains. Then the image of that organ part—say, a heart valve or artery—can be rotated on the screen and observed from different perspectives. One could look down into the organ, look at all its sides, even look at it from underneath.

The machine has only recently been tested on living humans and is still undergoing close examination. It is not expected to be in general use for many years, when whatever knots that exist in the system are straightened out and its present exorbitant price can be modified.

Another video unit which is presently under investigation may become to the CAT what the CAT was to the X-ray: the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanner records not just structural observations but *functional* processes as well. The PET scanner is expected to provide science with a wealth of information about bodily processes, particularly those concerning the brain. For example, the PET scanner sees the flow of blood, not just the *results* of the flow as does the CAT.

Already the PET scanner has detected malfunctioning brain fibers which were causing uncontrolled epilepsy in eight children. After surgery, seven of these children remain completely cured of the condition.

It is hoped the PET scan will play an integral part in the development of new treatments for such areas of medicine as senility, stroke, and even schizophrenia, since the PET scan allows doctors to see cross-sectioned pictures of the brain's blood flow and chemical activity.

Medicine truly has come into its golden age with these video devices. The future of medical imaging promises even more techniques for diagnosing the ills of man. There is talk of holographic presentations, where the heart or other organ would float before the doctor, who would rotate it, even take it apart to see what is *going on*.

Until the day comes when holograms do indeed float before doctors, television will be an important instrument for precision *noninvasive* exploration of the human body. Despite the cost of the equipment and the added expense to the patient, television will continue to save thousands the expense of exploratory surgery, and sometimes even primary surgery.

When it comes right down to it, television in the hospital is *saving lives*. ■

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Prima FACIE

A FIRST VIEW OF WHAT'S NEW

VIDEO TAPES

MARY POPPINS. A Walt Disney Productions picture, video cassette from Walt Disney Home Video. Produced by Bill Walsh. Directed by Robert Stevenson. Screenplay: Bill Walsh and Don DaGradi. MPAA Rating: G. Running time: 139 minutes. \$74.95 retail.

Cast

Mary Poppins Julie Andrews
Burt Dick Van Dyke
Father David Tomlinson
Winnifred Banks Glynis Johns
Uncle Albert Ed Wynn
Policeman Arthur Treacher

Walt Disney Productions has done it again. It seems rather inherent in any Disney product that quality is always carefully controlled. Even their cheaper plastic toys appear better constructed than similar toys based on other cartoon characters. This care and quality control has now extended to their line of home video products.

I had first seen *Mary Poppins* when it was released in 1964. Even though I was then at an age when teenagers traditionally ignore Disney movies as too cloyingly cute or childish, there was something magical about *Mary Poppins*, something that enthralled me even against my teenage better judgment.

The movie seemed to have that same effect on most everyone; it won five Academy Awards: best actress; best song; best film editing; best original music, and best visual effects. Even then I remember being disappointed that co-star Dick Van Dyke, who truly shines in his role as Burt, the chimney sweep, had not been nominated.

I had not seen the movie again for 16 years, and when it was finally re-released in 1980, I jumped to see it, this time taking my three-year-old daughter with me. It was her turn to be enthralled—she saw it three times in the theater and begged to see it again—and my turn to see objectively how well the movie was really made.

The special effects are remarkable,

far beyond most of what is done today, even with all of Hollywood's sophisticated computers. In fact, the special camera used on *Mary Poppins*, because of cost, has not been used since, not even on Disney's own *Black Hole*. This special camera totally eliminates the faint blue outline that occasionally appears in many matte shots. In the blackness of space scene, the lines today are pretty much eliminated, but in ordinary scenes even a multi-million dollar feature like *Superman* suffered an occasional blue-line lapse. There are none in this film, not in the flying nanny sequence where dozens of stern-faced nannies are "blown away" by a magically - created wind, nor in the very tricky tea party sequence where five flying figures all move in different planes of action.

Those of you who have read the P.L. Travers' books know *Mary Poppins*. Those who have seen the movie know the basic plot: two cute but slightly troublesome children in England,

(Karen Dotrice and Matthew Garber) are real.

During the course of the movie we get involved with the children's father (David Tomlinson) who wishes to raise them in the proper British fashion, and their mother (Glynis Johns) who seems more interested in getting the vote for women (while still remaining subservient to her husband) than in caring for her offspring.

We go from the hilarious tea party sequence featuring the late comedian Ed Wynn, to the haunting melancholy of the Feed The Bird song. Here, Peter Ellenshaw's matte paintings not only serve to set the scene, but they give a feel to the picture that is hard to shake. The rotoscope animation of hundreds of fluttering birds also convey the feelings of both sadness and hope.

From here we go to what must be the highlight of the movie—the Chimney Sweep dance that combines a magnificently choreographed dance number starring Dick Van Dyke and



Mary Poppins is a fascinating experience, and the new Walt Disney Home Video tape shows off the movie in its best light.

circa 1910, have managed to chase away nanny after nanny until Mary Poppins appears. Using whimsical magic she calms down the children and takes them on one incredible escapade after another.

They pop in to a painting drawn by Burt where all the backgrounds and characters are cartoons. Only Burt, Mary (Julie Andrews), and the children

other chimney sweeps, along with mattes, animation, and other Disney illusions. There is no way you can leave this dance number without a feeling of joy.

The movie is vital even now, and so much better done than virtually anything that has appeared either before or since. Only the classic *Wizard of Oz*

equals it for story, song, and charm.

The film is a fascinating experience, and the new Walt Disney Home Video tape shows off the movie in its best light.

You will first notice its better-than-average cassette case. It is soft plastic, brightly decorated; and the tape is wedged tightly inside in an inner case which prevents it from moving about.

On back of the tape is a stamped code number which the Disney people are using to help prevent video pirating. That same number also appears on your TV screen in the upper left hand corner. However, only the bottom of the numbers are discernable and they do not distract you once the movie

begins.

Unlike many copy-guarded tapes, there seems to be very little roll problem here. I experienced only a slight flutter during the opening Disney Home Library music and the FBI warning. Once the film proper began, the flutter ceased.

Tape quality was excellent, perhaps the best reproduction I have seen in these mass-produced recordings. Blacks stay solid, subtle colors are clear and the picture proceeds with very few glitches. The sound was strong and vibrant.

The image is centered, rarely is anything off screen that should be on.

Only the tea party sequence has any problem at all in keeping all participants together.

I would strongly recommend the *Mary Poppins* video tape to anyone who has a family, or anyone who simply enjoys a good movie. Special effects freaks who think that anything prior to *Star Wars* has got to be prehistoric in quality will find this a pleasant surprise. This is a high-quality movie—perhaps one of the last that the Disney Studios has done—and this video representation is as well done as modern technology would allow.

—Marv Wolfman

RUDE BOY, The Clash. Produced and directed by Jack Hazan and David Mingay. Screenplay by David Mingay, Ray Gange and Jack Hazan. 123 minutes. MGM/CBS Home Video. \$64.95 retail.

If nothing else, *Rude Boy* succeeds in breaking the mold of conventional videorock, just as punk, the genre that spawned The Clash, succeeded in smashing the barriers of mainstream rock music. Unfortunately, it does not do so with much style or finesse.

It is the first videorock with a story line . . . of sorts. *Rude Boy* (a term that emerged from Jamaican reggae and ska music) is the story of Ray Gange, an unemployed, occasional roadie for The Clash who earns beer money working nights in a London sex shop. Ray is a somewhat pathetic character who drinks too much and proceeds to *degenerate* into a totally pathetic creature as the story progresses. Every other word out of Ray's mouth is one of the seven words you are not supposed to say on the public air waves, and he spouts punk banalities like "Don't call me 'love' because I don't believe in it."

The vision of England's punk scene in its heyday as portrayed through Ray's life is the vehicle for showcasing the music of The Clash. Most of the musical numbers were recorded live and capture the raw energy of early Clash songs like "White Riot" and "London's Burning."

The Clash came into being in 1976 as punk was gaining momentum in England. The band was initially managed by Bernard Rhodes, a former partner of Malcolm McLaren—creator of the Sex Pistols. Their music, written by guitarist Mick Jones and singer Joe Strummer, is a combination of punk existentialism and Jamaican reggae rhythm.

The directors show a certain com-



mitment to realism, and this realism adds a new dimension to the visual display of rock music. Several sequences shot during the 1978 *Clash On Parole* tour show fans being savagely beaten and ejected from concert halls by unruly bouncers. While this may seem unpleasant to some, it is an everyday reality of live rock concerts. The violence during Clash performances conveys the high voltage tension that surrounded punk music.

Rude Boy might have been a good quasi-documentary of punk life if it were not for the inept attempt on the part of the writers and directors to make some sort of political statement. In the opening scene, Ray walks through a tenement splattered with graffiti exclaiming "Vote for National Front," the neo-naziesque movement in England. As he walks down the

The Clash (from left): Nicky Headon, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon, and Joe Strummer.

street the camera pans across two election posters—one for the Workers Revolutionary Party and the other for the Socialist Workers Party.

The first time The Clash appear, Joe Strummer is wearing a Red Brigade t-shirt in support of the left-wing Italian terrorists, who have a fondness for blowing off people's kneecaps with shotguns. Ray and Joe hold a drunken discussion in which Joe defends his political stance by saying, "Why I think the left-wing is better than the right-wing is it's not just for the few." Ray astutely retorts, "My idea is to make sure I become one of the few."

Strummer's lyrics do not add any depth to his viewpoint. In "White Riot" he observes "All the power is in

the hands of people rich enough to buy it," and "No Reason" reveals "... the black man got the rhythm and white man got the law." These are hardly insights worthy of a two-hour video treatise.

The Clash play at an anti-National Front rally, and Ray gets up on the stage after the band leaves and yells "More Clash!" into the microphone despite his dislike of politics, particularly anything remotely related to communism. While later playing billiards with a friend, Ray concludes the anti-fascists are just cowardly socialists, afraid to admit their true political persuasion.

The "political statement" of *Rude Boy* is reduced to an absurd dichotomy: you are either a socialist or a Nazi.

Rude Boy also attempts to portray the plight of blacks in England. In a complete nonsequitor, two black youths are abruptly arrested for some obscure crime. In the final scene before the credits roll, we see one of these black youths again. He is talking to his lawyer who asks him why he signed a confession if it were not true. The youth replies, "If you were getting beat and kicked about wouldn't you sign it?"

Heavy stuff, huh?

Part of the fault may lie in the editing. Smooth transitions are conspicuous in their absence. The scenes shift quickly, with no apparent logical progression: a shot of Ray in a truck with another roadie shifts to one of the police observing black suspects, which then changes to a shot of the sex shop where Ray works and then suddenly several members of The Clash are outside a court hall where they have been fined for shooting pigeons.

Perhaps these abrupt scene changes are meant to convey the passage of time, like pages flying off a calendar, but they only succeed in confusing the observer.

Despite its many faults, *Rude Boy* will probably be of historic value to aficionados of punk. It is not so much a story as it is a little slice of the prevailing rock culture of England circa 1978. Before they attained a more refined new wave style, The Clash was every bit as punkish as any other English band of the time. Since the Sex Pistols self-destructed before they could make a film with Russ Meyer, *Rude Boy* may become the most significant visual documentation of the punk phenomenon.

In the long run, though, punk turned out to be somewhat vapid, and a two-hour exposure to punk philosophy

may prove to be terminally tedious for most viewers.

—Rick Oliver

APOLLO: VISIONS OF AN EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL WORLD, a documentary edited by Bastian Wimmer. Distributed by Hyde Park Media, Niles, IL. \$54.95 retail.

Chances are you were one of the billion people who, in late summer of 1969, waited anxiously in front of the television as the surface of the moon skidded by, coming closer and closer until a voice from 250,000-plus miles away announced "The Eagle has landed!"

Who but the most cynical—like those who thought it was all being played out on some Hollywood backlot—did not experience a sense of wonder as Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the Moon's surface? Even his somewhat corny observation seemed appropriate: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

The landing of Apollo 11 was one of those events like the Kennedy assassination that people remember in terms of where they were when it happened. With this particular moon landing mostly everyone was in front of their television set. And now you can reexperience the event thanks to *Apollo: Visions of an Extraterrestrial World*, a documentary of two lunar missions.

Part One covers the Eagle's historic mission and Part Two concerns the flight, almost three years later, of the problem-plagued Apollo 16, the last time man visited our closest celestial neighbor.

The documentary focuses almost as much attention on the Earthside part of the two missions as it does on the astronauts cavorting about the Moon's surface. At first I was a bit put off by this. After all, how long can a huge room filled with bank after bank of controls and computers staffed with hundreds of technicians be interesting? But as the story of the two missions unfolds it becomes apparent that the brief human presense on the Moon was due to an extremely complicated, almost awesome interaction between literally thousands of people and technology. In reality, only a very small portion of these space flights actually took place off the planet.

When engine problems threatened the lives of the astronauts, Earthside teams went into a period of intense activity and came up with a successful and workable solution. Only about six hours were lost on the scheduled itinerary.

Still, I wanted to see a bit more of

the footage from the Moon and of the Moon taken from the orbiting mother ship. I also wanted to be apprised of some of the numerous scientific discoveries which resulted from the many experiments conducted by the astronauts. In an effort to present the adventure of the missions, the *Apollo* documentary lost sight of the true import of the flights—the quest for knowledge.

Despite these few quibbles I have with the film, I found *Apollo: Visions of an Extraterrestrial World* extremely enjoyable. It made me nostalgic for those seemingly bygone days of Man on the Moon. It bothers me that we have not continued manned missions to the Moon and that no plans presently exist for sending Americans beyond the confines of our atmosphere.

—Alex Josephs

—VIDEODISCS—

THE BLUES BROTHERS. A Universal Picture; videodisc from MCA DiscoVision. Produced by Robert K. Weiss. Directed by John Landis. Executive producer: Bernie Brillstein; Screenplay Dan Aykroyd and John Landis. MPAA Rating: R. 132 minutes. Stereo sound. \$29.95 retail.

Cast

Joliet Jake John Belushi
Elwood Dan Aykroyd
Curtis Cab Calloway
Mystery Woman Carrie Fisher
Nazi Commander Henry Gibson
With: James Brown, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, John Lee Hooker, John Candy, Frank Oz, and the Blues Brothers Band.

AT HOME WITH DONALD DUCK. A Walt Disney Production; videodisc from MCA DiscoVision. Directed by Jack Hannah. No MPAA Rating. 46 minutes. \$9.95 retail.

Cast

Donald Duck Himself
Huey, Dewey, Louie ... Themselves
Mickey Mouse Himself

In case you haven't been reading our videodisc reviews lately, let me start off by repeating a point: *laser (optical) videodiscs are fun*. They are the ultimate video toy.

With this attitude in mind, I picked up two discs: *The Blues Brothers*, a recent DiscoVision offering at a new top retail price of \$29.95; and *At Home With Donald Duck*, one of the initial offerings in the format. I had seen both before: the Brothers in the



theater (indeed, the movie had just left the Chicago movie houses a couple weeks before the disc was released), the Duck several times on the soon-to-be lamented Disney television show. Obviously, I enjoyed both sufficiently to buy the discs.

The Blues Brothers is a better disc than it was a movie. The blues—the musical form—appeals to damn few Americans, and, despite the longevity of such pop blues performers as Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin, neither are likely to be defined by *Variety* as “boffo B.O.” It is odd, then, that Universal would commit such an incredible sum of money—a reported \$40,000,000—to a motion picture loosely based upon a throwaway routine on *Saturday Night Live*.

The movie did pretty well in the theaters. If it was made for, say \$10,000,000, it would have been highly profitable and the board of directors at Universal would have named a dividend after the dark-specked boys. The car chase scenes are among the best—and funniest—ever filmed. The music is fantastic.

The problem is, there isn't much movie left over for such things as plot and acting. Concert scenes are paced by car chases, and Belushi and Aykroyd never get the chance to act their way out from behind their shades.

That is what makes the videodisc version so entertaining. Each major musical number—well, thirteen of them—is encoded with a special chapter designation: if you want to see Aretha Franklin's show-stopping “Think” scene at the soul food cafe, all you have to do is put on side three and punch the chapter 1 buttons: within seconds, the machine locates the beginning of the number.

As such, *The Blues Brothers* videodisc is a truly first-rate work of videorock. With a minimum of effort, you can play the thirteen numbers almost

non-stop in less than an hour—nice, if you do not care to see the rest of the movie.

My only complaint here is that the stereo sound is not quite as good as that found on other stereo optical discs. There is a bit of hiss on the track—less than on your average capacitance record (33⅓ r.p.m.). Most of my friends failed to notice it, used as they are to phonograph record limitations.

The other movie, of course, is the car chase. *The Blues Brothers* has lots of them, including the gratifying shopping mall destruction chase and the stupefying cops vs. Brothers vs. country singers vs. Nazis denouement. That last one is a chase scene that just does not end: the Brothers escape the cops out in the sticks, lead them into a chase all the way into the city (getting rid of a bunch of annoyed country singers in the process), get picked up on by a band of roving Nazis, somehow manage to maneuver the cops into each other and the Nazis off a bridge, only to wind up at their destination: the steps of City Hall, where a clerk—played by Steven Spielberg—takes their tax payment for the local orphanage.

Some fun. I've taken out that last scene and watched it about as often as I've taken out that Aretha Franklin number—which is to say, real often.

All the special effects help. I've fast forwarded cars, let them ram into trucks, reversed the picture causing the car to mystically fly out of the truck, and switched gears once again—having the Blues Brothers endlessly ram the enemy. If I only had this when I was twelve . . .

I should mention I have also watched the movie in total on one occasion.

The disc is worth the \$29.95. Five bucks more than your average major motion picture on optical disc, if you like the movie, you certainly get your

dollar's worth: stereo sound, two and one-quarter hours of movie, and a full complement of special effects. And the chapter indexing.

I should note MCA recently released *The Blues Brothers* on prerecorded tape, and I really cannot recommend it in that version: mono sound, low-quality (comparatively speaking) sound and video, no musical chapter indexing, and almost three times the cost.

At Home With Donald Duck is a first-rate compilation of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse cartoons, spanning the half-century history of the characters. The bridges used to link the cartoons are well-made and combine to present an additional story: Donald throws a birthday party for himself, and forces his nephews to watch a bunch of Donald Duck cartoons (the kids, of course, would rather watch Mickey Mouse cartoons, and eventually their wish is granted: a solo effort and an early piece that employs both the Duck and the Mouse—back when Donald Duck looked more like a goose).

If you are at all interested in Disney cartoons, you probably have seen this show on television: I believe it was run on the NBC Sunday evening Disney program roughly every year during the past decade. The end-credits are those from the television show.

There are advantages to the videodisc version. In addition to the above-mentioned special effects—which here allow you to see how a cartoon is animated, frame by frame—the disc actually is less expensive than a tape you could make at home, recording a Disney broadcast. A one-hour, fastest speed tape (providing the best quality) probably would retail at a bit more than the \$9.95 retail on the optical disc.

And, as we keep saying, the quality is superior. Almost unbelievable. Better than pre-recorded tape, better than broadcast television, even better than that received over cable television.

Outside of the noted sound difficulty on *The Blues Brothers*, both discs were made to the highest imaginable production values. Both will provide a picture as good as your television is capable of serving up.

And both videodiscs are a hell of a lot of fun.

—Mike Gold

ACROBATS OF GOD. Videodisc from MCA DiscoVision. Produced by H.R. Poindexter. Directed by Dave Wilson. Choreographed by Martha Graham. Executive Producer: John Houseman.

No MPAA rating. 30 minutes. Mono sound. \$6.95 retail.

Cast

Choreographer Martha Graham
Dance Master. Robert Powell

A number of years back when I was an acting major at Northwestern University, I learned the difference between stage acting and television acting. To make a sweep of the arm on stage, I was told, do it from the shoulder. To make it on television, do it from the elbow.

As I sat watching Martha Graham's piece, *Acrobats of God* on videodisc, I was sadly reminded of the spatial limitations of the home screen.

Dance is simply too big for television. Think about it—in almost every shot of your average show, the people on screen are only partially pictured. You never see them from the tops of their heads to the tips of their toes. Yet in dance, full-body shots for the duration of the presentation are imperative. What is dance if one cannot see the whole body, muscles flexed in the ultimate of human movement?

Acrobats of God is a fairly well-directed effort considering the aforementioned limitations. In a surprise credit, *Saturday Night Live's* director Dave Wilson reveals he knows how to handle a subject vastly different from late night comedy-variety. His full-body shots are close in enough to appreciate the dancers' superb physiques and moves; far out enough to

catch most of the peripheral action. The cramped feeling I got as the dancers disappear too quickly off to the side is the medium's fault, not Mr. Wilson's.

And the dancers . . . ah, the dancers. *Acrobats of God* is a piece about the art of dancing: the art and its agony. The masterful Martha Graham and partner Robert Powell team up in the piece as choreographer and whip-wielding dance master to inspire/cajol/demand the dancers accomplish the most impossible of moves. A sexually-paired team of ten dancers respond more than admirably, lifting, extending, twirling, and supporting to perfection until exhaustion must end a full day's work.

In addition to playing the part of a choreographer, Martha Graham did the actual choreography of this 1969 piece. Considering she was 77 years old at the time (she did not appear to be a day over 50), I felt an awesome sense of the amount of energy that was stored within her. Though her part called for little more than exquisite posturing and energetic walking as she tried to wring inspiration from her soul, she brought to it as much concentration and artistry as her far more active supporting cast.

Her choreography is so wonderfully clear that even an audience member ignorant of dance can follow the action. A stirring musical composition by Carlos Surinalin, conducted by Eugene Lester, intertwines beautifully.

In another surprise credit, John Houseman of *Paper Chase*/Smith Barney fame appears under the heading of executive producer.

You easily would have to double the price of this videodisc to see the same piece performed live—and then without the legendary Martha Graham in the cast. You would not have to worry about spatial limitations in an auditorium; but then you would not be able to freeze the action and practice dancing in the privacy of your own living room either.

This videodisc is an excellent example of how the new technology can allow one to see an artistic work as it has never been seen (freeze frame, slow motion on command) before, right in your own living room.

I must mention I had some problems with the technical quality on this particular disc. The picture was annoyingly snowy and the sound was afflicted with an accompanying rasp. I had no trouble returning the disc, although I was asked to complete a brief questionnaire as to the nature of the problem before I received my refund. I would have preferred an exchange for the same disc, but unfortunately it was sold out.

If you enjoy dance, *Acrobats of God* should be a delightful acquisition. Even if you are not into dance, the genius of Martha Graham will make watching interesting and enjoyable. How can you lose for \$6.95?

—Ann DeLarye

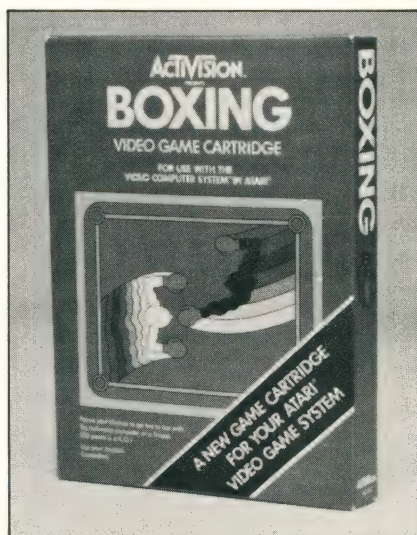
GAMES

BOXING, DRAGSTER, SKIING, FISHING DERBY, and CHECKERS video games from Activision. \$21.95 each.

Once upon a time there was this big video game manufacturer named Atari, and Atari employed people who designed video games. These guys created the games, designed the computer circuitry, wrote the rules, stuck it all into a box, and put it out on the open market.

Then one day, a couple of these designers upped and quit. They moved down the block and started their own company—Activision—and designed their own games and put them into their own boxes, and they made certain their games would play in Atari game computers. And in Sears game computers, which are made by Atari.

Whether these guys have the right to do this is a matter for the courts to decide—and Atari's legal department is playing with it right now. However,



the first set of Activision games are now on the market.

Boxing

The playing field gives us a perspective from above the boxing ring so we see the heads, shoulders and arms of the electronic boxers (it

sounds weirder than it looks). You control the movement around the ring of a boxer and throw his punches and jabs. You can either play against the computer or against a friend. Each round lasts two minutes and points are scored each time a punch lands with a resounding electronic THUD!

The two scores and the timer appear at the top of the set. Though it is possible to rack up 100 points on a knockout, neither reviewer achieved this lofty goal. We did find the computer to be a bit of a partywaist once we got the hang of the game—the difficulty switch only makes this game a bit more challenging.

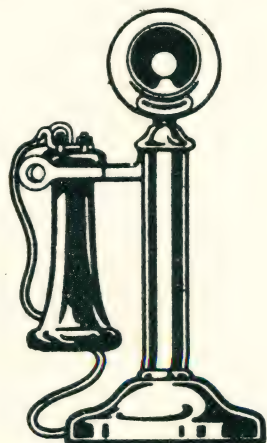
The game was fun at first, but we both tired of it within an hour. Only a boxing enthusiast would be entertained any longer.

Dragster

We found this game to be the most challenging of the five reviewed—it requires a greater degree of concentration, dexterity, and coordination than most other games. The screen

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shows two dragsters, each with a tachometer, a gear position meter, and a timer. If the tachometer—which begins as a wavering dark green line—turns red and stays red too long your engine blows and literally falls out of the dragster, thus knocking you out of competition until the next run. You can play the game against the clock or against a human opponent.

The joystick control is both clutch and gear shift; the red button is the gas peddle. Cars start each race in neutral and as the race gets underway you have to shift gears in much the same way you would a real car.

Great fun. We'll play this one again and again.

Skiing

Skiing would be great fun, if you did not have to get up early in rotten



weather and risk breaking every bone in your body. The Activision game cuts out the hassle.

The cart consists of ten games—five of varying degrees on slalom runs, five of varying degrees on downhill racing. You can run into trees and gate flags—

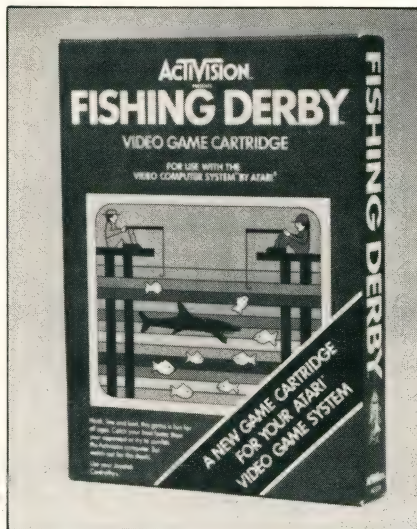
your object is to ski a certain number of meters in the shortest possible time.

In this game the joystick controls the position of the skis and, therefore, the direction you travel. Mastering your ski position takes awhile: it is very easy for them to go horizontal and put a stop to the racer's flight.

Activision's *Skiing* is challenging—and recommended.

Fishing Derby

Here is a cute game which you might want to play with a child. Two fisherman (one controlled by an opponent or by the computer) sit on opposite piers. The joystick controls the movement of the pole back and forth and line movement up and



down—the button will increase the speed of the line as it draws up from the water. The object is to hook fish: they swim back and forth under the piers; you get the fish to bite by getting the end of the line near his mouth. There are six rows of fish, the deeper the fish is swimming the more it weighs. The first person to catch 99 pounds of fish wins.

The trick is to get your catch up past the shark that is swimming back and forth at sea level. The shark will gobble the fish right off your line—when we played the game, the shark failed to gobble up either fisherman.

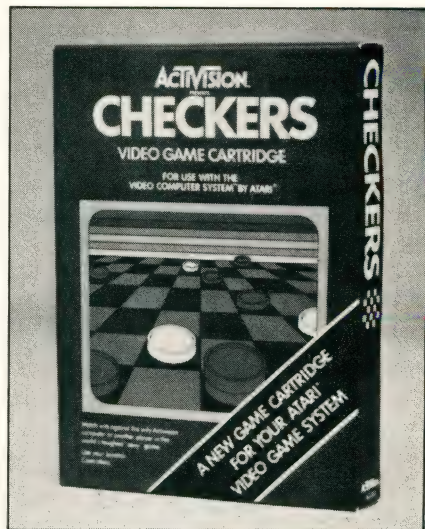
The game is fairly easy to master in a matter of minutes—but is nonetheless a lot of fun. *Fishing Derby* also has the prettiest playing field of all the Activision games.

Checkers

Four games here: three modes of difficulty against the computer and one in which you play a human opponent. You move the checkers to their desired location by placing a flashing "X" over the checker, pressing

the button, moving the piece to its intended position, and pressing the button again for release. Then the screen goes blank while the computer mulls over its course of action. The blankness can last anywhere from a few seconds to as long as four minutes. This particular aspect of the game can be exasperating, since you are then required to memorize the positions on the board if you want to *mull over* strategies between moves.

Compared to Atari's *Video Checkers*, Activision has a much nicer looking playing field. Both operate similarly but Atari gives you 19 games—although half of Atari's are "giveaway" games wherein you try to lose. We prefer Activision's *Checkers* solely because it is nicer to look at—an important



consideration during a two hour game.

If only the screen did not go blank like that.

* * *

A few overall comments: the graphic design is weaker than Atari's, overall, and Atari's graphic design is nothing to write home about. The games are a bit simpler than Atari's (or Intellivision's, for that matter), but nonetheless entertaining. The instruction booklet is less attractive but far easier to understand.

Actually, Atari does not have all that much to complain about. You need to buy an Atari computer in order to play the games, and if you buy an Atari to play Activision games, you will probably wind up buying a mess of Atari games before too long.

—T.B. Martin
and Alex Josephs

BOOKS

MAKING HOME VIDEO. John Melville Bishop and Naomi Hawes Bishop. Wideview Books, 1980. 200 pages

with black and white illustrations.
\$7.95 paperback.

We all need handbooks to guide us through the various stages of life. As children, many of us had scouting manuals which pointed us on the path to achievement; our teen years saw us avidly thumbing through the *Joy of Sex* or other, cruder tomes in preparation for that big rite of passage. Now, we have *Making Home Video* to take us from being passive video enthusiasts to full-blown, actively-producing video freakdom.

Making Home Video is not for the idle reader. You must have some technical familiarity with television (not a lot, but some), and a basic video vocabulary—with words like zoom, VCR, horizontal lines, resolution—in order to keep this book from slowing down. The Bishops have an adequate 300-word glossary in the back to help the reader over more in-depth references, and a short appendix entitled “how video works” in the event one’s memory needs refreshing. A person with no prior knowledge could pick up this book and learn from it, but there are easier ways.

John and Naomi Bishop know their

stuff. John is a documentary editor and cameraman, Naomi is an anthropologist whose work on numerous occasions has taken her into the field with her video equipment.

It is clear throughout the book that the authors and their equipment have *been there* many times. The paragraphs are sprinkled with warnings about pitfalls and how to avoid them: along with talk of vidicon tubes in cameras, you learn how not to burn them out. This is far superior to the rather annoying tactic many authors take of saving all the possible problems one can encounter and jamming them into a single confusing chapter.

I was particularly impressed with the thoroughness of their “basic elements” chapter. It was so thorough that literally *everything* you could want to know about home video equipment was mentioned. A discussion of basic video tape, for example, covered signal-to-noise ratio, dynamic range, and color and sound rendition. A Beta vs. VHS overview covered all the technological changes in each format. Proper microphone set-up and use was detailed over eight illustrated pages; lighting, an often-overlooked aspect of home video shooting, was given two. There was

even a paragraph devoted to the uses of gaffer tape.

And, in a gutsy move, the Bishops closed their chapter with a section entitled “obsolescence.”

Even though the book gives you purchasing advice, I am convinced the best way to read this book is *after* you buy your equipment. After reading about how to light a subject, you want to jump up and experiment. Comparative photographs showing shots with and without a wide-angle adapter on your camera beg you to leave your armchair and see for yourself.

Oftentimes books dealing with such a technical subject do little more than arouse mild curiosity. *Making Home Video* spurs its readers to action. Although co-authored, the book has a friendly single-voice delivery which takes the edge off the technical explanations by sounding conversational.

After a chapter in which angle, level, focus, and composition are explained, the authors close by encouraging the camera be passed around to all family members regardless of age. “Home Video is well-suited to a naive and minimal technique that ignores everything in this chapter,” the Bishops claim, and

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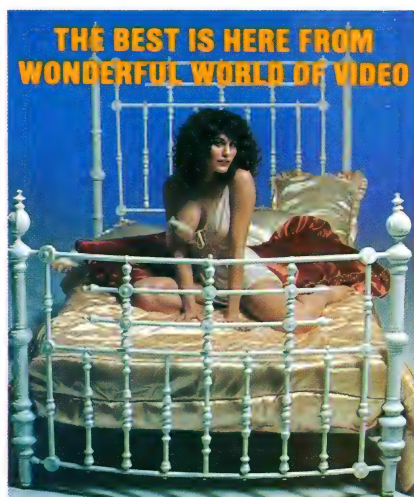
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suddenly the rest seems easy. Ignore everything in the chapter? Really? Then it *must* be masterable—how hard can it be if the Bishops let their four-year-old do it?

There are chapters on more advanced video production techniques, the growth of video as a home medium in the last few decades, and current ideas for using your equipment. The "growth of video" chapter eases you into the technical body and the "uses" chapter eases you out. The book has a nice flow.

Two appendices deal with making your own video feedback art, and taking good still pictures of the television screen. They are mildly amusing, but will not interest everyone.

Rounding it off, the Bishops have included a list of ten special suppliers for video equipment such as image enhancers, lens accessories, cable connectors, and so on. In some cases, approximate prices are listed.

This list reveals the book's major drawback. *Making Home Video* is going to date very fast. The prices the book lists, however approximately, are probably a little out of date already; its chapter on "the future" will certainly be out of date by next year, dealing with such topical items as the current availability of videodisc software. The best one can do for now is buy the book right away and read it as soon as possible—it's worth the effort.

—Ann DeLarye

X-RATED

INSIDE SEKA (1980), Directed by James Hammerhill. Written by Seka and Ken. Distributed by Video-X-Pix, New York, NY. \$89.95 retail.

SWEDISH EROTICA, VOLUME 27 (1980), various directors. Distributed by Caballero Control Corporation, Canoga Park, CA. \$49.95 retail.

Inside Seka is the hottest selling adult video cassette on the market these days, and its star, Seka, is quickly becoming the all-time reigning porno queen. She has stunningly good looks and seems to be the consummate professional of her craft... no small feat, considering the amount of drek going around the porno world these days.

A word of warning is in order though: the appropriately-named *Inside Seka* is definitely not for those who like an interesting story line or exotic locale in tandem with their



erotica. The same can be said for the Swedish Erotica offering.

And I'll be honest about the fact that I am not quite used to viewing pornography on my television screen, so my observations are colored by the kick I get out of home video porno, whether it is well done or just this side of godawful.

Though shot exclusively indoors—and though some poorly dubbed and contrived moaning sneaks through with a bit of inane dialogue—*Inside Seka* contains some truly great scenes.

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The permutations of how many people can fit together in how many ways seem almost endless in this movie, with one-on-one, two-, three-, and even four-on-one. There are even a couple scenes with just one person.

The extremely thin storyline of *Inside Seka* centers around a fairly typical conjugal session between Seka and Ken, her on-and-off-screen husband. Seka proceeds to relate many of her "true" previous sexual experiences, which appear in flashbacks, each lasting about ten minutes. Despite some corniness posing as spontaneous dialogue (some of it referring to truly impossible anatomical configurations), the various scenes are generally interesting and genuinely titillating.

Two scenes from the movie come to mind. One takes place in the orgy room at the infamous Plato's Retreat in New York City. The other involves a gentleman, a semi-contortionist, who—ahem!—is able to "service" himself . . . standing up no less. It reminded me of a snake swallowing its tail.

The quality of the cassette I viewed was average. There was a bit of graininess throughout and there was a large glitch in the middle of the tape that destroyed a scene's continuity. The camera work was very well done and presented a few voyeuristic perspectives I previously have not seen in skinflicks.

In all, I found *Inside Seka* an enjoyable picture, but not a real jean-tearer.

Swedish Erotica, Volume 27 is one of the newest offerings from the now-famous series of hot action outtakes from standard full-length features. As such this tape is for those who want their porno uncluttered by anything else but the barest hint of a plot. In this context, then, *Volume 27* presents us with four vignettes featuring such stars as Seka, John Holmes, Annette Haven, and Desiree Cousteau. One involves a sexy nurse and her "patient," another concerns an orgy with two couples—you get the idea. No hot scenes on moonlit tropical beaches, but some well done action nonetheless.

The *Swedish Erotica* series caters to those whose interests run to the kinky but not-to-kinky variety. It is for those who like a degree of believability and sincerity in their movies, and it is for those who prefer that ladies not take their shoes off in bed.

Swedish Erotica, Volume 27 is a good buy. The tape quality was excellent: sharp, clear images. And, oh those images . . .

—T.B. Martin

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"Put On Your Jargon Shoes"

By Bob Soron

EVERY HOBBY OR SPECIALIZED field has its own jargon or set of buzzwords. Sometimes they're necessary because there is no other way to express a concept, sometimes they're needed as shorthand, and sometimes they're used just to impress those "not in the know." Computer jargon in particular seems complicated—there is always something else to learn. It is not hard, it's just new.

Many of the buzzwords you encounter as you learn about computers are acronyms. Generally they're capitalized, which makes them easy to spot and to remember. Two of the most frequent acronyms are RAM and ROM.

By now, you know that computers work with electronic memory. To use a program, you load it into memory. This is RAM, or Random Access Memory. This simply means you can put things into the memory, and take them out, at will. You can also refer to specific portions of the memory. Everything you put into the computer, be it the program itself or information the program is using, is stored in RAM.

You will frequently see terms like "16K" next to "RAM." The number before the "K" tells you how much memory is involved. "K" itself is a bit tricky. When referring to RAM, it means 1024 characters. Computers change the information inside them to binary numbers (more on this in a couple paragraphs), and 1024, a power of two, is considered close enough to 1000 that they are considered interchangeable. When you discuss the amount of RAM, then, you are getting more than you bargain for—16K is actually 16,384 characters.

When the memory is outside the computer, though—in storage devices like cassette tapes and floppy disks—K refers simply to 1000 characters. A disk that can hold 88K can hold 88,000 characters.

Computer users rarely talk about the number of characters that can be stored in RAM. Instead, they use the

term "bytes." A byte *usually* is one character. As I mentioned, computers work with binary numbers. Since it would be slow and error-prone to take these ones and zeroes one at a time, it takes eight simultaneously—and eight "bits" is a byte.

When you discuss the amount of RAM, then, you are getting more than you bargained for—16K is actually 16,384 characters.

There are instances where a byte is one word—specifically, when it is a command to the computer. Since the language is pre-defined, the computer converts each command to a specific number, just as it converts each letter or number. This saves a considerable amount of RAM.

There is also memory in the computer that you cannot fiddle around with. This is ROM, or Read-Only Memory, and it is permanent. The ROM contains the operating instructions the computer uses. You can examine specific portions of the ROM, as you can the RAM.

All of these terms are pronounced as they look, even the acronyms. "RAM" is pronounced like the animal, and "ROM" rhymes with "bomb." "16K" is simply "sixteen kay," though you can also say "sixteen kilobytes."

One acronym that is *not* pronounced as it looks is "CPU" (just pronounce the letters). This stands for the Central Processing Unit, which is where the action takes place. The information from the memory goes here; once the CPU has used the information as the program instructed it, it goes back to memory

and, possibly, to an output device.

"Output" has many outlets, usually to a TV or monitor, both called a CRT. It can also be attached to a cassette recorder or floppy disk drive, or to a printer. Input can be from any of these or from the keyboard. For input and output in general, you will see terms like "I/O," as in "The Apple II supports many I/O devices."

(Yes, by the way, the CRT can be used for input. You need a light pen, which is a tube with a photo-electric sensor at the end. By touching the sensor to the screen, you send information the sensor sees to the computer.)

"ASCII" (pronounced "ass-key") stands for the imposing "American Standard Code for Information Interchange." All this means is that an ASCII computer uses a standardized code when converting letters, numbers, and commands to numbers. This system allows different computers to use the same peripherals, so that when a computer tries to control a printer, for example, it won't start spewing out paper instead of typing a letter. All American home computers, and most foreign models that enter the USA, use ASCII code.

When you're working with input, you will want to know how long it will take to load in a program. Look for the "baud rate" of the input method you're using; it will probably be 300 baud, unless you are using the much faster floppy disks or the slower hand typing. "300 baud" means that 30 bytes per second are being loaded into RAM ("baud" is pronounced "bawd"). The load speed at 300 baud will probably be a bit less than 1K per minute. It will vary with each program.

There's plenty more jargon out there, but you're now past the worst of it. If you have any questions on any aspect of home computers, send them to me at *Video Action*, 21 W. Elm, Chicago, IL 60610. Next month, I'll recommend some books and magazines that will help clear up the rest of this mess.

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